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WRITINGS OF JAMES FINTAN LALOR

THE WRITINGS

OF

JAMES FINTAN LALOR,

WITH

An Introduction

EMBODYING PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS.

BY

JOHN O'LEARY.

And a Brief Memoir.

DUBLIN:
T. G. O'DONOGHUE, 3 BEDFORD ROW, ASTON'S QUAY.
U. S. A.
FRANCIS NUGENT, 52 MAIN STREET, PEABODY,
MASSACHUSETTS.

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INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE been requested to say something by way of introduction to a collection of the writings —small in bulk, but still, to my mind, very big in substance and form—of my old friend LALOR, and I willingly comply with the request. Scarcely any man living, at least out of his own family, with the probable exception of my friend Thomas Clarke Luby, can have known him better, and few, if any, can have a higher opinion of the intellectual and moral merits of the man. I cannot, however, do better for Lalor's memory than by extracting from a book of mine, still unpublished, all that directly bears upon him. I extract, then, without any further comment, but only with the explanation that, from the nature of my book, I could not easily detach from it what I think it necessary to say here of

my friend, without at the same time saying something about myself:—

Early in '49, I think on some rumour of something going on, I went to Dublin. Anyway, I at least soon came to know that something was, if not going on, at least about to go on—that, in fact, various anti-English schemes and plots were taking shape in the active and fertile brain that presided over the frail body of James Fintan Lalor.

Lalor had of course been arrested under the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, as he had been one of the most prominent and certainly the ablest contributor to the *Irish Felon* newspaper. He had just been released on account of the wretched state of his health, and when I first saw him at his lodgings in Capel Street he seemed as if he might give up the ghost at any moment, and could only gasp out his words, which, however, came freely when they could come at all, during the intervals between his constantly recurring fits of asthmatic coughing. The ruling passion might

literally be said to be strong in death; strong and strenuous till death it certainly was.

Gradually Lalor began to grow better, though very much of an invalid he remained to the end; but even immediately after getting out of prison, long before he was able to leave his bed, he had gathered about him many ardent spirits, notably among the more intelligent of the artizan class.

I now spent a great part of my time for several months with Lalor; first in Dublin, then in Clonmel, in my own town of Tipperary, and in Limerick, and profitably, as well as pleasantly, this time was certainly passed, if not for the country, at least for my own mental and moral development. Without possessing the great conversational gifts of Kenyon, Lalor was still a very able and interesting talker, as he was certainly a very powerful and eloquent writer—eloquent from his impassioned nature, and powerful from the strong basis of logic and reason that underlay his passion. A great public speaker, I think, he might have been had

only opportunity offered; if I could at all fairly judge from one occasion when I heard him address a dozen or, perhaps, a score of men in a private room; as a great writer he may, in a sense, be said to be, even from such scanty specimens of his work as remain to us. Constant communion with such a man could scarcely fail to be other than a clear mental gain to me. Critical I was even then, and combative too; and Lalor gave me plenty of occasion for the play of both these faculties. While Lalor was at bottom a good, if not a good-natured man, his nature, as is but too often the case with men labouring under his peculiar physical deformity (he was a hunchback) had contracted a sort of moral twist. He was, if not malignant in the English sense, certainly what the French call *malin*. His humour was sometimes horribly sardonic. I remember, for instance, his spending the greater part of an evening, in Limerick I think, debating with great gusto on the pro' ability of my being hanged. I tried to stop h by fully admitting the likelihood of such

event, but that did not hinder him from going on. I think, too, but this might be fancy, that when I naturally said that if I were hanged, so, most certainly, should he be, he either found some loopholes of escape for himself, or sought to show me how much more serious the certainty would be for me—for while I was young and healthy, he, though not old, was not likely to live long. This may serve as a specimen of the humour he often indulged in, but his moods were various indeed. He could be anything but dull; and that is no mean merit either in a man or in a book. Of books, by the way, we talked much; indeed, I think most of our talk was of books, though, of necessity, much of it was political, and some of it politico-economical, owing to Lalor's peculiar theories on the land question. And here, perhaps, I may as well say a few words on my attitude then and since towards that land question—which for the last fifteen years or so has been the question of questions in Ireland—at first setting aside the national question altogether, and then connecting some vague and

indefinite notions of Nationality with very definite notions about land. But I don't mean to be controversial, but only explanatory. I think I had taken some tinge of agrarianism in '48, caught up, no doubt, from the writings of Mitchel, and still more of Lalor himself. But when I came to detach these notions from their practical connection with an Irish insurrectionary movement—with which they were always connected in the minds of both Mitchel and Lalor —and when I began to discuss Lalor's theories with himself, I found my agrarian ardour fast cooling down, and finally disappearing altogether. It was not that then, as now, I did not feel keenly the wretched condition of the Irish peasantry, and the too often cruel conduct of the Irish landlords; but then, as now, I believe that the full remedy for that wretchedness and those wrongs could only come from freedom. England and English rule, directly and indirectly, proximately or remotely, were at the bottom of the whole trouble. English rule remaining, I saw little chance of the satisfactory

settlement of the land question, or, indeed, of any question ; and to shake, if not to shatter that rule, was then, as it is still, the great aim, or, if you will, dream of my life.

Much I certainly learned from him on Irish and other matters, and for that reason, as well for his own remarkable character, he claims notice at my hands. It is, however, more tempting to talk of Lalor, who was a big man, than of his conspiracy, which turned out to be a sufficiently small thing in the end. To that end I must get as quickly as I can.

After much moving about for many months on the part of Lalor, Luby, myself, and others, and much conferring with many more or less influential people in the various counties I spoke of before, it was agreed that action was to be taken on a certain day, or, rather, on the night of that day. My part in that action was to consist in gathering such people as I could from in and about Tipperary, and directing them on Cashel—a town some ten miles distant —where Lalor then was, and where he intended

to attack the barracks (if sufficient forces could be got together), with what exact ulterior object is more than I can now call to mind. It is probable it was intended that we should afterwards march on Clonmel with such contingents as might be supplied by Brennan, who was to operate, and, indeed, did operate, in another region on the same night. However, the ultimate object mattered not at all, for the immediate plan of an attack on Cashel proved an utter failure. It was arranged that the Tipperary men should meet at a place called Garnacarty, about a mile outside the town on the Cashel road. When I got there at some ten or eleven o'clock in the night, I found but few people—never, I think, more than forty or fifty—and mostly unarmed. After waiting till one or two in the morning, without any increase, or appreciable increase, in the number of my followers, I decided that it would be worse than useless to bring such a body with me into Cashel, so I let them go back to their homes; setting out myself, accompanied by two other young men, for

the City of the Kings—naturally in no pleasant frame of mind, but still hoping, if not hopeful, that I should find a different state of things there. It was substantially, however, the same story nearly everywhere. From Clonoulty alone —a place in the Thurles direction—had any considerable body (some hundred or hundred and fifty, and not badly armed, I believe) of men turned up. These men, after lying the most of the night in the vicinity of the town, were at last dismissed by Lalor, and found their way safely home; and, I suppose, with satisfied consciences, in that they, and they alone, might be said to have come up to the scratch. So far it was very much the "Wilderness" business over again, with one important improvement, however,—that there was no betrayal or leaking out of the design. The next day Lalor and I, finding ourselves and our schemes apparently unsuspected, moved on to Clonmel. Here, or at least soon after our coming, we must have been met by the news of Brennan's proceedings at Cappoquin, in the County of Waterford. Here

the police-barrack was attacked, with the result of some loss of life to both police and people, and the capture of some young men of the locality. Brennan himself, however, escaped, and soon after succeeded in getting off to America—where he died several years after, still young, and, if not famous, certainly more or less distinguished, and with the promise of a fair literary career before him.

Such was practically the end of Lalor's conspiracy—the result being substantially the same as in the operations of O'Brien and O'Mahony in the preceding autumn. The mountain in labour was not so big, and the mouse that came forth was not appreciably smaller; but still there was no gainsaying the fact that the product was only a mouse, and in so far ridiculous. Neither by secret nor by open means was anything in the insurrectionary way to be done there and then. That certainly was clear, and little more was clear to me then, nor do I know that a great deal has become quite clear yet. We hear much of another and a better way now, as we

heard much of many other ways and means during all these intervening years, but the end is not yet.

Lalor returned to Dublin with a big scheme in his head of setting up a paper on more advanced lines than those of the new *Nation*. It was with some view of something to be done for this paper that I was suddenly summoned to Dublin by Lalor, but I got up to town only to find him dead. He had succumbed rapidly, if not suddenly, to an attack of his old enemy—bronchitis. His death was felt as a great blow by all who knew anything of him, and I still think his loss to the country was considerable. He might never have done much directly as a leader, or even actor, in Irish politics, but indirectly, as a thinker and writer, he could scarcely have failed to have influenced them powerfully. We have had no political writer (and I know not that we have had any writer) since at all comparable to him in clearness, directness, and strength. Mitchel was, perhaps, as clear, and certainly far more graceful, picturesque, and im-

aginative, but not as direct or strong. Besides, nearly all Mitchel's writings after this time, which are far his greatest in style, and, indeed, in almost everyway, were published in America, and little read at the time—as, indeed, they are far too little read yet in the country which he had been forced to leave. Lalor's writings, which are not many, have still to be sought for in the pages of the *Nation* and the *Felon;* and if somebody should disentomb them, and give us at the same time some notice of the man and such of his private letters as may still be in existence, a very positive boon would be conferred both on lovers of Ireland and of literature.

—I need only add that the boon which I desiderated above is now conferred upon the Irish public, and I sincerely hope that that public will show itself practically grateful for the gift.

JOHN O'LEARY.

MEMOIR OF JAMES FINTAN LALOR.

In the fifth chapter of his "Four Years of Irish History," Sir Charles Gavan Duffy has described, with customary effectiveness, Lalor's first introduction to the Irish people through the *Nation* newspaper. The references to Lalor's personality are worth reproducing:—"He was deaf, near-sighted, ungainly, and deformed; and his deficiencies cut him off, not only from any career needing sympathy and publicity, but even from social intercourse except with his nearest kin. But Nature is rich in compensations; he was trained by solitary meditation to a concentrated and savage earnestness, which often distinguish men to whom the ordinary channels of communication are closed; and he was endowed with a will and a persuasiveness of prodigious force. Of all the men who had preached revolutionary politics in Ireland, this isolated thinker, who had hitherto had no experience either as a writer or an actor in public affairs, was the most original and intense. His imagination was so vivid that his desires framed themselves like palpable images in his mind, and he lived in a world of dreams, far more real to him than the world that lay about him on an Irish

farm. He projected, as solitary thinkers are apt to do, in the unfenced field of fancy, and his schemes seemed so logically exact and demonstrable that he could discern no difficulties which forbade their immediate execution. . . . Having never known the invaluble discipline of rivals and competitors to reduce his plans to practical dimensions, he nourished an indomitable intellectual pride in his work, which was probably aggravated by the necessity a deformed man feels to insist upon his individuality. Had he been six feet high, had his sane and vigorous intellect been lodged in a sane and vigorous body, had his *amour-propre*, which was irritated by opposition and unreasonable contempt, been soothed by sympathy and success, he might have rivalled Tone and Owen Roe O'Neill."

Duffy had never heard of Lalor until the letter which opens this collection of Lalor's writings was received by him, and he was consequently startled at the power and freshness of it. The letters which follow, Duffy truly characterises as "marvels of passionate, persuasive rhetoric." The leading Young Irelanders felt that a new force had come into active existence. Mitchel was specially impressed, and shows the influence of Lalor in all his subsequent writings. Doheny went to visit the new champion of popular

rights, and says—"I could not be persuaded that I had before me, in the poor distorted, ill-favoured, hunch-backed little creature, the bold propounder of the singular doctrines in the *Nation* letters." That Lalor was the suggester, if not the propounder, of most of the views of modern land reformers is unquestionable. That his writings are wonderfully virile and luminous will not be disputed. Yet these striking theories and prophecies, these epoch-marking articles and letters, have never been collected in a volume during the half-century which has elapsed since their first publication. Whether Lalor's views are sound or otherwise, the eloquent productions in which he expressed them are eminently worthy of preservation.

Of his life very little is known. He was the eldest son of Mr. Patrick Lalor, a prosperous gentleman farmer and extensive landholder of Queen's County, who had made himself very popular by his opposition to the tithe system, and between 1832 and 1835 was M.P. for his county. Though James Fintan Lalor was not heard of in public affairs until he wrote to Duffy early in 1847, he had keenly watched movements and events in Ireland from his earliest youth, and had, as his writings show, thought deeply and continuously upon them. Educated at home

under private tutors, and at Carlow College, he was proficient in Greek and Latin, but his favourite study, we learn, was chemistry, and we may assume that the principal part of his reading was in history and politics. He became an ardent Republican, and it was he who chiefly influenced Mitchel and won him over to the plan of armed insurrection. After the suppression of Mitchel's *United Irishman* he went to Dublin to edit the *Irish Felon*, its successor, and there and elsewhere preached the doctrine of a general strike against rent, afterwards journeying down to Holycross, Co. Tipperary, where, at a public meeting, he endeavoured to form a "Land League" according to his principles, the watchword of which was to be, "Pay no rent." But the farmers, much to his disappointment, failed to respond to his entreaties. He distributed shillings amongst the labourers along the roads in Tipperary, urging them to take the field with him. He was arrested in Ballyhane, a few miles from Nenagh, and lodged in the gaol of the town. Having been subpœnaed as a witness in the trial of John Martin, one of the principal counts in whose indictment was founded on one of Lalor's articles, he was removed to Newgate Prison in Dublin. After a very short incarceration, his health, always wretched, grew worse and

worse, and, finally, he received the last rites of the Church, so dangerous was his state. His fellow-prisoners talked of memorializing the Government for his release, but he would not hear of it, and vehemently protested against the idea. The memorial was sent nevertheless, but Lalor was not released until the imprisonment had done its work. He lingered for a few months, dying at his residence, 39 Great Britain Street, on December 27th, 1849, aged 40 years. He was buried in Glasnevin on the Sunday following. He was an uncompromising Nationalist "to his last sigh."

Standish O'Grady, who is anything but a Nationalist in the political sense of the term, has written very eulogistically and justly of Lalor's rank as an originator, as a pioneer. "James Fintan Lalor," he says, "was a man who united a most logical understanding with a force and depth of imaginative revolutionary passion without parallel in his time, a man who, first in modern Europe, preached the startling doctrine that land titles, not originating in the people's will, are invalid; that the nations own the land, a doctrine of which Europe will hear much in the coming century, for, whether it be true or false, the world must assuredly face it, as the old wayfarer had to face the sphinx.

"From the brooding brain of the Tipperary recluse, from some fiery seed dropped there by the genius of the age, sprang forth suddenly an idea, full-formed, clear, mature, clad as if in shining armour, and equipped for war. Something very new and strange, something terrible as well as beautiful there emerged. . . . Lalor's idea passed into the mind of Mitchel and others. With them it passed into America, propagating itself there in the Irish-American press, and from America it has come back upon Europe, advertising itself as 'Progress and Poverty.' Lalor's idea, now well-clad, that is to say, well printed, well bound, less Irish and more nice, possibly, but, beyond question, robust and vehement, walks abroad everywhere to-day."

Should this book receive the encouragement which it deserves and is expected to obtain, it will prove to be the first of a series of works really national and really literary in subject or style. The crystallization of fundamental ideas upon the national and land questions which constitutes Lalor's contribution to Irish literature and politics is here placed before Irish and other readers as a sample of what will follow if success is achieved by the present volume.

O'D.

THE

WRITINGS OF JAMES FINTAN LALOR.

To CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY,

EDITOR OF THE "NATION."

TINAKILL, ABBEYLEIX,
January 11th, 1847.

I am one of those who never joined the Repeal Association or the Repeal Movement—one of Mr. O'Connell's "creeping, crawling, cowardly creatures"—though I was a Repealer in private feeling at one time, for I hardly know that I can say I am one now, having almost taken a hatred and disgust to this my own country and countrymen. I did not join the agitation, because I saw—not from reflection, but from natural instinct, the same instinct that makes one shrink from eating carrion—that the leaders and their measures, means, and proceedings, were, intrinsically and essentially, vile and base; and such as never either could or ought to succeed. Before I embarked in the

boat I looked at the crew and the commander; the same boat which you and others mistook in '43 for a war-frigate, because she hoisted gaudy colours, and that her captain swore terribly; *I* knew her at once for a leaky collier-smack, with a craven crew to man her, and a sworn dastard and foresworn traitor at the helm—a fact which you and Young Ireland would seem never to have discovered until he ordered the boat to be stranded, and yourselves set ashore.

I would fain become one of the "National" party, if they could consent to act along with me and I with them. But I confess I have my many doubts—I have had them all along; and they have been terribly strengthened by the two last numbers of the *Nation*. I mean those of December 26 and January 2; the last (January 9) I have not yet seen. It is not figure, but fact, that reading those two numbers made me *ill*. I have long been intending to write to you to resolve those doubts, and have only been prevented by sickness. I must now defer doing so for some little time longer, and my reason for writing the present hurried note is this: It has just occurred to me that, at the meeting on Wednesday, an Association may possibly be formed on such a basis, and resolu-

tions or pledges adopted of such a character, as would exclude and excommunicate me and many beside.

These resolutions or pledges may relate either—1st, to the end; 2nd, to the means. Now remark—1st, As to the end:—Should the end be defined strictly, in terms or effect, to the Repeal—simple Repeal, and nothing but or *besides* Repeal—I would thereby be excluded. For, in the first place, I will never contribute one shilling, or give my name, heart, or hand, for such an object as the simple Repeal by the British Parliament of the Act of Union. I shall state my reasons hereafter, not having time now. Don't define the object, nor give it such a name as would define it. Call it by some general name—independence, if you will—and, secondly, I will never act with, nor aid any organisation limiting itself strictly to the *sole* object of dissolving the present connection with Britain and rigidly excluding every other. I will not be fettered and handcuffed. A mightier question is in the land—one beside which Repeal dwarfs down into a petty parish question; one on which Ireland may not alone try her own right, but try the right of the world; on which you would be, not merely an asserter of old principles, often

asserted, and better asserted before her, an humble and feeble imitator and follower of other countries—but an original inventor, propounder, and propagandist, in the van of the earth, and heading the nations; on which her success or her failure alike, would never be forgotten by man, but would make her, for ever, the lodestar of history; on which Ulster would be not "on her flank," but at her side, and on which, better and best of all, she need not plead in humble petitions her beggarly wrongs and how beggarly she bore them, nor plead any right save the right of her *might*.

And if the magnitude and magnificence of that other question be not apparent and recognised—any more than the fact that on its settlement now depends the existence of an old and not utterly worthless people—it is partly, indeed, because the mass of mankind see all such questions, at first, through a diminishing glass, and every question is little until some one man makes it great; but partly, also, because the agitation of the Repeal question has been made to act as a proscription of every other. Repeal may perish with all who support it sooner than I will consent to be fettered on this question, or to connect myself with any organised body that would ban

or merge in favour of Repeal or any other measure, that greatest of all our rights on this side of heaven—God's grant to Adam and his poor children for ever, when He sent them from Eden in His wrath and bid them go work for their bread. Why should I name it?

National independence, then, in what form of words you please; but denounce nothing—proscribe nothing—surrender nothing, more especially of your own freedom of action. Leave yourselves free individually and collectively.

2nd, As to the means:—If any resolution or pledge be adopted to seek legislative independence by moral force and legal proceedings alone, with a denunciation or renunciation of all or any other means or proceedings, you may have millions of better and stronger men than I to join you; but you won't have me. Such pledge, I am convinced, is not necessary to legalise any association. To illegalise there must, I conceive, be positive evidence of act or intention—deeds done or words spoken. Omitting to do anything can surely form no foundation for a legal charge. What! Is silence a proof of criminal intention? I speak, of course, in ignorance, being no lawyer, thank God! But whether I be correct or not, I never will subscribe

or assent to any such pledge or resolution. As regards the use of none but legal means, any means and all means might be made illegal by Act of Parliament; and such pledge, therefore, is passive obedience. As to the pledge of abstaining from the use of any but moral force, I am quite willing to take such pledge if, and provided, the English Government agree to take it also; but "if not, not." Let England pledge not to argue the question by the prison, the convict-ship, or the halter; and I will readily pledge not to argue it in any form of physical logic. But dogs tied and stones loose is no bargain. Let the stones be given up; or unmuzzle the wolf-dog. There is one at this moment in every cabin throughout the land, nearly fit already to be untied—and he will be savager by-and-by. For Repeal, indeed, he will never bite, but only bay; but there is *another* matter to settle between us and England. There has already, I think, been too much giving in on this question of means and force. Merely to save or assert the abstract right for the use of other nations or other times, won't do for me. We must save it for our own use, and assert it too, if need be, and occasion offer. You will receive, and, I hope, read this on to-morrow

morning, before the Committee meet. My petition to you is that you will use your influence to prevent any of those resolutions from being adopted, which would cut me off from co-operating with the new Association, should one be founded. Don't mention my name. It is one not worth half a farthing; but such as it is I don't choose to give it to the Seceders until I have some better guarantee than I possess as yet, that their new organisation will be anything better, stronger, or nobler than a decently conducted Conciliation Hall, free from its open and brazen profession of meanness, falsehood, cowardice, and corruption, but essentially just as feeble, inefficient, and ridiculous.

Is there any apology required for addressing you in this manner? I don't know. Perhaps I have no right—though I have been a Seceder since I ceased to be a child. I owe to you some gratitude. *You have given me a country.* Before your time I was an alien and an exile, though living in my own land. I hope you won't make me one again.

This letter has been hastily written; and I have not acquired the faculty of expressing what I wish with clearness or facility. Still I hope you will understand, or at least that you

will not *mis*understand me. The *Nation* of last Saturday might possibly give me information which would render my writing plainly unnecessary; but I don't receive it until Wednesday, being in partnership with another person.*

* The above letter is taken from Sir C. G. Duffy's *Four Years' of Irish History.*

A NEW NATION.

Proposal for an Agricultural Association between the Landowners and Occupiers.

TO THE LANDOWNERS OF IRELAND.

TINAKILL, ABBEYLEIX,
April 19th, 1847.

I address you, gentlemen, from a great distance—the distance that separates you from the people—for I am one of the people. This is a disadvantage of some account, and might be discouraging at a season more settled. But I know that in periods of peril, when distress and disaster are present, and danger and dread are in the future, men are allowed to assume rights which must be in abeyance during ordinary times. This is my reason and right in addressing you—that I am excited and authorised by the feelings and emergencies of the occasion. This is my claim to a hearing—not that I ask it in my own cause or, in that of the class I belong to; nor that I urge it for the sake of the masses

of men who are unable to ask it for themselves; but that I claim a hearing and crave to be heard on your own behalf—on behalf of your own interest, and honor, and existence, as owners of that soil on which thousands are famishing to death for want of food.

My general object in addressing you is that of calling public notice, if I can, to the full extent of the effects which I think must inevitably follow past or present events, if the cause of these events be not checked or changed. All the facts I possess I have considered and counted in one view together, in their connection and consequence, and inferred the result. This is a task which few others, I fear, have undertaken, nor is it any matter of surprise. Within sight and sound of this dismal calamity, amid the actual horrors of every passing hour, it is scarcely possible to look far into the future, or take thought and care for remote results. In the presence of famine men are blind to its effects. It is doing its work in the dark, and no watch is set or warning raised. From every house and every voice throughout this land there is but one cry now—the cry for food. Food for to-day, and food for to-morrow—for this year and the next. But not all the clamour and outcry that has

been raised throughout Ireland during the last few months has added a single pound to the supply of food, either for this year or the next. What men were unable to do, they set about doing; what they were able to do they left and are leaving undone. For something else is wanting, and requires to be provided, besides food for to-day or to-morrow—else a revolution is at hand. A revolution of the worst type and character—not such as when a nation breaks up under armed violence, to reunite and rise in structure as strong as before; but such as when it falls to pieces, rotting to a final fœtid ruin.

Besides the general object mentioned, I have a particular and more definite purpose, which will develop itself as I proceed. It would be useless to state it formally before it can be fully understood. Though I write more especially for you, my lords and gentlemen, landowners of Ireland, yet, I write also for the public; and shall address myself to either, as occasion may seem to demand. The failure of the potato, and consequent famine, is one of those events which come now and then to do the work of ages in a day, and change the very nature of an entire nation at once, It has even already produced a deeper social disorganisation than did the

French Revolution—greater waste of life—wider loss of property—more than the horrors, with none of the hopes. For its direction still seems dragging downwards, while her revolution took France to the sun—gave her wealth, and victory, and renown—a free people and a firm peasantry, lords of their own land. It has unsettled society to the foundation; deranged every interest, every class, every household. Every man's place and relation is altered, labour has left its track, and life lost its form. One entire class, the most numerous and important in Ireland, has already begun to give way; and is about being displaced. The tenant-farmer of ten acres or under is being converted into an "independent labourer." But it is accomplishing something more than mere social derangement, or a dislocation of classes. It has come, as if commissioned, to produce, at length, and not too soon, a dissolution of that state and order of existence in which we have heretofore been living. The constitution of society that has prevailed in this island can no longer maintain itself, or be maintained. It has been tried for generations; it has now, at least, been fully and finally tested; and the test has proved fatal. It was ever unsound and infirm, and is now breaking to pieces under the

first severe experiment, an experiment which that of any other country would have easily withstood. Nor heaven nor human nature will suffer it to be re-established or continue. If the earth, indeed, with all things therein, was made wholly for the few, and none of it for the many, then it may continue; if all creation was made for you, my lords and gentlemen, and none for us, then it may continue; if men are bound to live on for ever, slaves to a dominion that dooms them to toil, and cold, and hunger—to hardship and suffering in every shape; if they have no right even to life except at another's license, then it may continue; if they be bound to submit in patience to perish of famine and famine-fever, then it may continue. But if all have a right to live, and to live in their own land among their own people; if they have a right to live in freedom and comfort on their own labour; if the humblest among them has a claim to full, secure, and honest subsistence, not the knavish and beggarly subsistence of the poorhouse, then that constitution can not and it shall not be re-established again. When society fails to perform its duty and fulfil its office of providing for its people, it must take another and more effective form, or it must cease to exist. When

its members begin to die out under destitution—when they begin to perish in thousands under famine and the effects of famine—when they begin to desert and fly from the land in hundreds of thousands under the force and fear of deadly famine—then it is time to see it is God's will that society should stand dissolved, and assume another shape and action; and He works His will by human hands and natural agencies. This case has arisen even now in Ireland, and the effect has already followed in part. Society stands dissolved. In effect, as well as of right, it stands dissolved, and another requires to be constituted. To the past we can never return, even if we would. The potato was our sole and only capital, to live and work on, to make much or little of; and on it the entire social economy of this country was founded, formed, and supported. That system and state of things can never again be resumed or restored; not even should the potato return. A new adjustment is now to be formed, is to form and develop itself; a new social order to be arranged; a new people to be organised. Or otherwise, that people itself is about to become extinct. Either of these is inevitable, and either is desirable. In condition, and character, and

conduct, a stain to earth, a scandal and a shame among the nations, a grievance to Heaven, this people has been for ages past a dark spot in the path of the sun. Nature and Heaven can bear it no longer. To any one who either looks to an immediate directing Providence, or trusts to a settled course of natural causes, it is clear that this island is about to take existence under a new tenure, or else that Nature has issued her decree, often issued heretofore, against nations and races, and even for the same crime—that one other imbecile and cowardly people shall cease to exist, and no longer cumber the earth.

The power of framing a new order is in your hands, my lords and gentlemen, if you choose to exercise it. The work of reconstruction belongs of right to you, if you have the wisdom and the will to do it. It is in emergencies and occasions like the present, rather than in ordinary and settled times, that a national aristocracy is required, and if they be not worthy of such occasions they are worthless altogether. It is a time like this that tries and tests the worth of a class, as it tests the worth of individual men. Not to time should the task be committed, nor to chance; not to the government of England, which is incompetent to the case; not to the

parliament of England, where you are made a mark for pelting at; nor to the desperate remedies of men whom you have, yourselves, made desperate. Ireland demands from you now something more than her present dole of daily food—a mode and system of providing full food for herself. She looks to you for this—that she be not condemned to live as a beggar on public alms, nor as a pauper on public works and poorhouse rations; but aided or enabled to find or form a mode of making her bread in all future time by free, unforced, and honest labour. She has lost her means of living; she requires some other, more sufficient and secure than those she has lost. Her demand, in full and fine, is for what is of more effective worth and weight than all the political constitutions that were ever promised—for what senates or sovereigns cannot make or unmake, but men must make for themselves—her demand for a new SOCIAL CONSTITUTION, under which to live. This is the task you are called on to undertake, the work you are wanted to do, or forfeit your footing in this island of ours—a work to which political constitution is light in comparison and little in importance. Political rights are but paper and parchment. It is the social constitu-

tion that determines the condition and character of a people—that makes and moulds the life of man.

We are now living in the midst of a social anarchy, in which no man knows with certainty what he is, or what he can call his own. Never was government or guidance more necessary to a people; but government or guidance there is none, for the great purpose needed. An extreme and extraordinary case has arisen—one that seldom arises in modern times—and not to be judged or treated by any ordinary law. A new structure of society has to be created; and the country has a right to require of you to counsel and conduct and lead her; because you own her soil, because your own worth and value are in question—your interest and position involved and committed; because the work cannot so speedily and safely be done without your aid; because in some respects and in some degree you are considered specially charged with the calamitous crisis that has occurred; because your rights of ownership are thought by numbers to be the only obstacle to the creation at once of a sound system of social prosperity and happiness, which would be formed by the natural energies and social instincts of mankind, if those energies

were left to act, and not fettered or interfered with by your claims of dominion ; and, finally, because you ought of right to be—where you have never chosen to be—at the head of the people. And at their head or at their side you must now stand, or else your aid will not be taken. On other terms it will not now be accepted ; and the work will be done by other hands than yours. You are far less important to the people than the people are to you. You cannot act or stand alone, but they can. In the case that has arisen, the main power is in their hands, and little in yours. Your power of position has departed. You cannot re-form and re-organise a whole people without their own consent and co-operation. You cannot act against them—you cannot act without them. They can do what is wanted of themselves, and without your assistance. They have the will, and may learn the way. A dissolution of the social system has taken place. The failure of the potato was the *immediate, exciting* cause. Into the *predisposing* causes it is needless for the present to inquire. There was no outrise or revolt against it. It was not broken up by violence. It was borne for ages with beggarly patience, until it perished by the irritation of

God in the order of Nature. A clear, original right returns and reverts to the people—the right of establishing and entering into a new social arrangement. The right is in them, because the power is in them. The right lodges where the power lodges. It is not a case to which governments or parliaments are competent. The sole office and duty of government under the circumstances is that of supporting the destitute, and maintaining the public order during the period of transition and re-organisation. Should it attempt doing more than this, it will be assuming a power which it does not possess, and cannot even make an effort to exercise without committing injustice, doing injury, and suffering defeat. With the great body and mass of the people, in their original character and capacity, resides, of necessity, the power, in its full plenitude, of framing or falling into a new form of organisation—a new mode of living and labour. Your aid, my lords and gentlemen, is most desirable, if accorded on terms and in a mode which would be thought likely to contribute to general benefit and happiness. On other terms, or for other objects—with a view to your own personal interests alone, and on terms to assert and secure your own position at any cost to the country

and community—if offered on such views and terms, your service and aid will not be accepted; and the present condition of anarchy will be protracted by strife and struggle, terminating, possibly, in violent convulsion, from which you, at least, would come out the losers, whoever might be the winners. To ensure against such a contingency, it is necessary that you should now combine and co-operate with that people from whom, for long ages, you have stood apart, aliens and enemies to them, as they to you. They count more in millions than you count in thousands. If you desire that they and you should now join hands to carry the boat over the rapids, it must be on terms which they will accept; on terms of advantage to them as well as to you—and the first condition and very basis of a union must be the distinct acknowledgment and assertion, in its widest extent, in its fullest force, power, and plenitude, of the principle of ALLEGIANCE TO COUNTRY. On any other basis no federation can form or be formed, take effect, or be of force, in Ireland now. To save mistake I ought to mention, and mark what it is I do *not* mean, as well as what my meaning is. I do not mean that you should declare for Repeal. I scarcely know that I can call myself a Repealer,

further than this—I would not say aye to the question if it were put to me to decide. The results of Repeal would depend on the means and men by whom it should have been accomplished. It might give to Ireland all that Ireland wants, and is withering in want of—equal liberty and equal laws, science and art, manufacture and trade, respect and renown; wealth to the merchant, security and comfort to the cottage; its pride of power and place to the castle, fame and fortune to genius and talent, all of that which ennobles and endears to man the land he lives in—this it might do. It might subject us to an odious and ignoble tyranny. I am far from wishing you to take any course that would pledge you to Repeal, or to any other political measure. I do not write with a view to Repeal, or any other political object whatever. My meaning is far more general, and states itself in more general terms. Nothing is requisite or required that would commit you to particulars, to any political party, cause, or course of conduct. But a full act and avowal of attachment and allegiance to this island, in priority and preference to any and every other country—this is required, and will be strictly required; not in mere idle form of protest and

profession, but in full efficient proof and practice That Ireland is your own mother-country, and her people your people,—that her interest and honour, her gain and her glory, are counted as your own,—that her rights and liberties you will defend, as part of your inheritance,—that in peace you will lead her progress, and carry her banner in battle,—that your labour shall be in her service, and your lives laid down at her need,—that henceforth you will be, not a foreign garrison but a national guard,—this you must declare and adopt, as the principle of your proceeding, and the spirit of your action, and the rule of your order; for these are the duties of nobility. Adopt this principle, and you are armed; on it is your safety and your strength; the future is fettered at your feet; and your name and race shall flourish and not fail. Ireland is yours for ages yet, on the condition that you will be Irishmen in name, in faith, in fact. Refuse it, and you commit yourselves, in the position of paupers, to the mercy of English ministers and English members; you throw your very existence on English support, which England soon may find too costly to afford; you lie at the feet of events, you lie in the way of a people, and the movement of events and

the march of a people shall be over you. Allegiance to this fair island; it is your title of tenure to the lands you hold, and in right of it you hold them. If you deny and disown it, you assert another title, and must determine to hold your inheritance by force, at your own will and to our injury, in despite and defiance of us and ours for ever. This would be a bootless and feeble insult, and dangerous withal; for your title is worth little indeed under the law you would appeal to: that while from Ireland you take rank and revenue, blood and birth and name—everything that makes home, and binds to country—you yet look not to her, but to another land, for home and country; that you desert and disown, if not hate her old native people; that in England are your hearts and hopes, and that all your household gods are English. This crime is charged to you; unjustly charged, I trust it is—for a worse crime, and more infamous than disloyalty to kings or crowns, is disloyalty or treason to country. It is a crime not made by lawyers, but made by God; a crime against Nature itself—against all its laws, affections, interests, and instincts. Yet the charge is not made against you without colour of truth and show of reason. On every question that arises,

in every contest and collision, whether of honour or interest, you take side and cause with England. All blame for this does not rest on you; but some of it does. Much and most of it rests on a class of men whose claim to attention, however strong, I must defer to a future letter. All such ground of charge must be removed and renounced. For ever, henceforth, the owners of our soil must be Irish. To all who own land or living in Ireland, Ireland must henceforth be the Queen-island. She holds in her hands the hostages for their fealty, and will not longer put up with TREASON. On no other common ground or general principle can a federation take place between the nobles of the land and the nation at large, than that of common faith and fealty to this their common country.

The formation of the Irish Party was hailed at the time by many as one step of a movement in the direction of Ireland. It may, perhaps, indicate a change of ideas, if not of feelings. You have probably begun to find out that if your feelings are English, yet your fortunes are Irish; that Ireland's peril is perilous to yourselves; that in renouncing your country, and adopting another, you renounce and revolt from the laws of Nature; and that Nature herself is

strong enough to punish the treason. You have, moreover, got some slight cause to doubt whether England esteems your attachment as of any value, your interest as of much importance, or your very existence as worth the expense and trouble of supporting. But we recognise nothing Irish in this party except its name ; nothing that can entitle it to command or call round it the hearts or hopes of this people ; or raise it to any higher position than that of a mere club, and a petty club, formed by a class for the single object of saving its own little interests from injury, at any cost to the country. Whether for its professed or private objects, whether as an Irish party or as a landowner's club, it is equally and utterly inefficient, and can do nothing for the salvation of the country or for yours. It excludes the people. It embraces no great public principles, passions, purpose, or policy. It bears no banner, and shows no motto. It rallies no support, and inspires no confidence ; proposes nothing, and promises nothing. To resist the minister, should his measures of relief or improvement be deemed injurious to the landowners,—this appears the sole object of the Irish Party. But your claims as landowners are no longer maintainable or defensible on their own

merits and means. To maintain, you must connect them with those of your country. A union between parties of the same class—a union of landowners with each other—is adequate to no purpose now. The union required is a union between all classes of whom the people is composed. You are powerless without a people beside or behind you. You must call the commons into your council; and make their private interests and public objects—nay, even perhaps their public passions—a part of your policy. The Irish Party must expand and enlarge into the Irish people; or another and more effective association be framed.

To organise a new mode and condition of labour—a new industrial system; to frame and fix a new order of society; in a word, to give to Ireland a new Constitution, under which the natural capacity of this country would be put into effective action; the resources of its land, labour, and capital developed and made available; its slumbering and decaying energies of mind and muscle excited, directed, and employed, and the condition and character of its people reconstructed, improved, and elevated; this, I have already stated, is the general object which now calls for the united action of the landowners and

people of Ireland in association assembled. The energies of nature and action of time working together in their wonted course and current will, indeed, in long or short, be adequate, without aid or effort of ours, to form a new and effective settlement of society; but the fabric thus formed will be raised out of the relics and rest on the ruins, of the present existing people in all its classes. For their own safety and preservation, it is necessary that all those classes should now combine to take the direction of that resolution which will otherwise effect itself, and which, indeed, is in actual process of being effected, without their consent, control, or guidance. That position has become too perilous to maintain. Your path of safety, as well as of honour, is now the public highway. No byways of your own will carry you through the perils that beset, and the greater perils that are before you. There are many and important questions at issue between you and the landholders, between you and the labourers, between you and the people at large, between you and other classes of the people, between those classes among themselves. No goverment, no legislation, no general statutes, no special statutes; no power on earth but the parties concerned; no mode on earth save that

of voluntary agreement, can settle those questions. Why should we not meet and settle them amicably? Leave them not to be settled by time or to be settled by strength.

What! to create a complete and efficient industrial economy; to form and give force to a new state and mode of existence; to organise and animate and put into healthy and vigorous action that complex living machine, a social system; to frame and adjust the fabric of society —its mightiest proportions and minutest parts, with all its vast and various interests, arrangements, orders, and conditions, independent yet involved, conflicting yet co-operating; what! to do all this? A work impossible to man; and which, in extent or detail, he never yet undertook or attempted to perform. A work of which the theory and principles are beyond his knowledge or discovery, and the practical execution beyond his utmost power. Nature has reserved it to herself, to effect by a process of her own; for which no artificial process ever was or can be substituted with success. A work we cannot do; God's hand alone, not man's, can do it. True— and neither can you form in all its parts the smallest plant that grows. But sow the seed and the plant forms. The powers of vitality require

but to be set in movement, and the contrivances of Nature left free to act. Even so it is in the case we consider. That work may be done, and *you* must do it or others will; and you must do it at once, for it cannot be waited for. Nor is it, when examined, an undertaking that need dazzle or daunt by its magnitude or multiplicity the meanest mind of all among us. It includes no such complication of difficult questions as it may seem to do; and the only question actually involved is one easy of settlement when put in comparison with its apparent mass. Its theory contains itself in a single principle; its practical solution is comprised and completed in a single operation. Lay but the foundation and the work is done. Lay the foundation, Nature effects the rest; society forms and fits itself—even as the plant grows when the seed is sown. Lay deep and strong, the only foundation that is firm under the foot of a nation—a secure and independent agricultural peasantry. A secure and independent agricultural peasantry is the only base on which a people ever rises or can be raised, or on which a nation can safely rest. A productive and prosperous husbandry is the sole ground-work of a solid social economy. On it and out of it springs the mechanic, and artizan,

and trading dealer; fed and fostered by it these swell into the manufacturer and merchant, who multiply into merchants and manufacturers; sustained by it still these enlarge, and gather, and solidify into companies, corporations, classes—into great manufacturing and mercantile systems and interests, which often, like unnatural children, disown and desert the mother that bore and the nurse that fed them; without it there is neither manufacturer, nor trade, nor means to make them, for it is agriculture alone that furnishes these means. Food is our first want—to procure it our first work. The agricultural class, therefore, must precede and provide for every other. It is first in order of nature, necessity, and time. It is an abundant agriculture alone that creates and sustains manufactures, and arts, and traffic. It is an increasing agriculture alone that extends them. For it is the surplus of food it accumulates, after providing ordinary subsistence, that forms new wants and demands, and the modes and means to meet and satisfy them. Such is the actual process, a process that never yet was reversed, or carried out in any other course or order; so it was at first, and so it will be for ever—in every time, in every clime, in every country. Adopt this process;

create what has never yet existed in Ireland, an active and efficient husbandry, a secure and independent agricultural peasantry, able to accumulate as well as to produce; do this, and you raise a thriving and happy community, a solid social economy, a prosperous people, an effective nation. Create the husbandman and you create the mechanic, the artizan, the manufacturer, the merchant. Thus you will work out the ordinance of God, in the order and with the powers of nature. All the natural motives and means with which man is endowed will come then to your relief and assistance, and do the rest. Any further interference with the course and process of natural laws would be useless and mischievous. Neither monarchs nor mobs ever yet were able to manage or modify that natural process, or ever attempted to enforce interference without doing grievous injury and gross injustice. The abortive and mischievous legislation of both old and recent times affords lessons enough of this, if we choose to learn them. There seems to be a vague impression on a large portion of the public mind of this country that national attention and exertion, as well as individual effort, should be directed into a course the reverse in its steps and stages of that rational order I have

pointed out. We are in the habit of hearing it asserted that a large development of manufacturing industry is what Ireland needs, and that to establish it should be her chief object. It is even assumed, not unfrequently, that a manufacturing system must precede, and is the only means of promoting, the improvement and prosperity of agriculture itself. This is an error I would wish to see abandoned. It distracts effort and attention from the point on which both ought to be directed, and on which they could act with effect. I am prepared to prove—what, indeed, any man may prove to himself—that neither by the private enterprise of individuals or companies, neither by the force of national feeling anywhere exerted, neither by public association or public action of any kind or extent, nor by Government aid, if such aid could be expected—neither by these or any other means and appliances can a manufacturing system be established in Ireland, nor so much as a factory built on firm ground, until the support of a numerous and efficient agricultural yeomanry be first secured! Good friends! you that are recommending us to encourage native manufacture and to form manufacturing associations; tradesmen and townsmen of Ireland! will you

cease to follow a phantom, and give hand and help to create such a yeomanry?

My general object, the formation of a new social economy, thus resolves itself into the formation of a new agricultural system. The principles on which that new system is to be founded must either be settled by agreement between the landowners and the people, or they must be settled by a struggle. What I think those principles ought to be, if they be made articles of agreement, as well as the practical mode of arriving at and arranging such agreement, I shall take another opportunity of stating.

You, however, my lords and gentlemen, it would appear from your present proceedings, have already settled among yourselves the entire future economy of your country—determined the fortunes and fate of this entire island—disposed of the existence of this little people of eight millions. The small land-holdings are to be "consolidated" into large farms, the small landowners "converted" into "independent labourers"; those labourers are, of course, to be paupers—those paupers to be supported by a poor law—that poor law is to be in your hands to manage and administer. Thus is to be got rid of the surplus of population beyond what the

landowners require. Meantime, by forcible ejectments, forced surrender, and forced emigration, you are effecting the process of "conversion" *a little* too rapidly, perhaps, for steady and safe working.

And so, it seems, you have doomed a people to extinction? And decreed to abolish Ireland? The undertaking is a large one. Are you sure your strength will bear you through it? Or are you sure your strength will not be tested? The settlement you have made requires nothing to give it efficacy, except the assent or acquiescence of eight millions of people. Will they assent or acquiesce? Will Ireland, at last, perish like a lamb, and let her blood sink in the ground, or will she turn as turns the baited lion? For my own part I can pronounce no opinion, and for you, my lords and gentlemen, if you have any doubts on the question, I think it would be wisdom to pause in your present course of proceeding until steps can be taken and measures adopted for effecting an accommodation and arrangement between you and the present occupiers of the soil, on terms that would preserve the rights and promote the interests of each party. If you persevere in enforcing a clearance of your lands you will force men to weigh your

existence, as landowners, against the existence of the Irish people. The result of the struggle which that question might produce ought, at best, to be a matter of doubt in your minds; even though you should be aided, as you doubtless would be, by the unanimous and cordial support of the people of England, whose respect and esteem for you are so well known and so loudly attested.

I have the honour to remain, my lords and gentlemen, your humble and obedient servant,

JAMES F. LALOR.

TENANTS' RIGHT AND LANDLORD LAW.

"I may be told that this famine is a visitation of Divine Providence, but I do not admit that. I fear there is blasphemy in charging on the Almighty the result of our own doings. . . . God's famine is known by the general scarcity of food of which it is the consequence. There is no general scarcity, there has been no general scarcity in Ireland, either during the present or the past year, except in one solitary species of vegetable. The soil has produced its usual tribute for the support of those by whom it was cultivated. . . . The vice inherent in our system of social and political economy is so settled that it eludes inquiry. You cannot trace it to the source. The poor man on whom the coroner holds an inquest has been murdered, but no one killed him. Who did it? No one did it. Yet it was done."—

RIGHT REV. DR. HUGHES.

TINAKILL, ABBEYLEIX,
Saturday, May 8th.

I have just now seen in the *Nation* of last Saturday, May 1, the foregoing extract from the lecture of Dr. Hughes, on the "Condition of Ireland."

Doctor Hughes does not seem sufficiently to understand how the failure of a single root can have produced a famine. "The vice of our

political and social economy is one that eludes inquiry." But is it, indeed, so obscure? Has it then been able to conceal or disguise itself? It must be dragged out. In self-defence the question is now forced on us, whether there be any particular class or institution specially chargeable? It is a question easily answered. Into the more remote causes of the famine it is needless now to enquire, but it is easily traced back to its immediate origin. The facts are few, and are soon told and speedily understood, when the conditions of the country it had to act on have first been stated. I state them from recollection; I have no returns at hand to refer to, but I shall be found generally correct.

There are in Ireland, or were last year, 231,000 agricultural families, comprising 319,000 adult male labourers, depending altogether on wages for subsistence. If I commit any mistake, it is that of overstating the number of such families. There was not constant employment to be found for those 319,000 men, and the rate of wages was very low. The labourer, partially employed and poorly paid, was unable, on the mere hire of his hands, to feed himself and those who looked to him for food. He borrowed for six months (May 1 to Nov. 1) from some neighbouring

farmer the use of a quarter of an acre of land. He paid for this six months' use the sum of £2 12s. 6d. The farmer, however, manured the land; he manured it by paring off with the plough a thin layer of surface, which the labourer left to dry, made up into heaps, and burned into ashes, which he spread over the ground. On the land so manured—for in no other mode was it ever manured—he planted potatoes, and was able to live; and he did live on, from year to year, from youth to grey hair, from father to son, in penury and patience. Whether the penury made the patience, or the patience made the penury, I stay not to enquire. Certain it is that they commonly go together. The details I am giving are sufficiently well known here, but I write for England. Such as I state him is, or was, the Irish labourer, that "independent" labourer, whose free and happy condition is now offered and recommended so strongly to the small landholder, as preferable to his own. Last year this man did as usual. He planted his potatoes; but when he came to dig them out, there were none to be digged. Two hundred and thirty thousand families begun to die of hunger; and famine ran wild into fever.

The cultivated soil of Ireland is distributed,

or was last year, into about 880,000 landholdings, each occupied by a family. Of this number of landholders, 510,000 were in occupation, each of farms varying in size from one acre to ten, and none of them exceeding that extent. This class of men differed little in the appearance, but very much in the reality of circumstance and condition, from the class of men labourers. Their circumstances varied with the size of the holding; but the lowest family among them stood far above the labourer. Their means of subsistence were somewhat greater, their securities for subsistence were far greater. They did not, as the labourers did, commonly starve or suffer hunger through the summer months—the *famine months*, as we call them in this country. Those of them who held farms of from five to ten acres of holding, enjoyed some little share of the comfort of life, which the careless and mirthful temperament of Ireland heightened into happiness. The men dressed well on Sunday, and the women gaily; at least in all parts of the country with which I am acquainted. The smallest landholders of this class were labourers also—labourers with allotments—labourers with assurance against positive starvation. Each man had at least a foothold of existence. Each man had

potato-ground at least; at a high rent, indeed, but not so high as the one-acre rent. Still, however, the lowest grade of these men were miserable enough; but not so utterly so as the mere labourer. Their country had hope for them, too, while she had none for the labourer. To avoid, if I can, confusion or complication of statement, I put out of view for the present the holdings of size beyond ten acres each, amounting in number to about 370,000. But such as I state it was the condition, so far as affects the small occupiers I speak of, in which the famine found Ireland.

Two circumstances of this man's situation, and those not unimportant, remain yet, however, to be stated, in account for the past, and in calculation for the future. One of them is, that he held his land by no other assurance, legal or moral, than his landlord's pecuniary personal interest in retaining him as a tenant. He had commonly no lease of his holding, or, if he had, it was rendered null in effect by numberless circumstances which I cannot stop to state. The feelings that exist in England between landlord and tenant, coming down from old times, and handed as an heirloom from generation to generation—the feeling of family pride,

the feeling of family attachment, the habit of the house, the fashion of the land, the custom of the country, all those things that stand for laws, and are stronger than laws—are here unknown; as, indeed, they are beginning to decay and die out in England. But the working farmer of Ireland, who held his own plough and acted as his own labourer, was able to pay a higher rent for his land than the farmer of any other class; and hence alone he continued to hold it. This was his title of tenure—his only title; his security against the grazier and against the extensive tillage-farmer; his sole security for leave to live.

Such is the first circumstance requiring note. The second is this:—The occupier I speak of, if his holding was very small, put the entire of it in tillage; if large, he put a portion in pasture. In either case, his tillage ground was appropriated to two crops—a potato crop and a grain crop. He sowed grain for his landlord, he planted potatoes for himself. The corn paid the rent, the potato fed the tenant. When the holding was small, the grain crop was insufficient, alone, to balance rent; a portion of potatoes made up the deficiency by feeding a hog. When the holding was larger, the grain crop was often more than sufficient, with the help of a hog, to

clear rent and tithe rent, county rate and poor rate. In such the cultivator had a small overplus, which he could actually dispose of as he liked, and he commonly laid it out in the purchase of mere luxuries, such as shoes, wearing apparel, and other articles of convenience. So stood the landholders of ten acres or under.

Last year this man did according to custom. He planted potatoes for his own support, he sowed corn for his landlord's rent. The potato perished; the landlord took the corn. The tenant-cultivator paid his rents—was forced to pay them—sold his grain crop to pay them, and had to pray to man as well as to God for his daily bread. I state general facts; I stop not to count scattered and petty exceptions. Who is it says the landlords got no rent last year? Bernal Osborne says so; and adds that the conduct of the Irish farmers in withholding their rents was most discreditable and disgraceful. One hundred voices and pens have said and repeated it. The landlords are in Parliament and in the "compositor's room;" the tenant-cultivators are not. The lion is no painter. It may be so that in districts of Tipperary the tenants, or many of them, kept their corn for food—thus paying themselves for their labour, capital, and

seed, and saving their own lives—instead of paying the land rent. It may be that in those districts the full rents were not paid; it may be that in parts of Galway, Mayo, Cork, and elsewhere they *could not* be paid. The oat crop failed partially, as the potato failed wholly; and when these were the crops in the ground the landowner, of course, in many cases, lost a portion of his rent, as the tenant-cultivator lost his entire provision of food. But these exceptions are inefficient against the facts I state. I say and assert that the landowners took entire possession of last year's harvest—of the whole effective sum and substance of that harvest. The food for this year's subsistence, the seed for next year's crop—the landlord took it all. He stood to his right and got his rent—and hunger was in five hundred thousand houses, pinching dearth in all, deadly famine in many. Famine, more or less, was in five hundred thousand families; famine, with all its diseases and decay; famine, with all its fears and horrors; famine, with all its dreadful pains, and more dreadful debility. All pined and wasted, sickened and drooped; numbers died—the strong man, the fair maiden, the little infant—the landlord had got his rent.

Relief committees were formed and public

works set on foot. The landowners grew bustling, if not busy, in the work of demanding relief and dispensing it. To the local relief funds very many of them, indeed, contributed nothing ; but there were others who contributed even so large a sum as 000·000¼ per cent. on their annual income, and were most properly appreciated and praised as beneficent individuals, while several gave a percentage of double or thrice that amount—and Ireland rung with applause. They demanded the Labour Rates Act; called for works which would increase the productive powers of the soil ; and grew clamorous in the expression of pity for their suffering countrymen, whom they charged Government with delivering up to famine by adopting an erroneous and insufficient system of relief. Finally, under the flag of their country they met in the Rotunda, and formed an Irish party for the professed object of establishing and supporting an Irish policy for Irish purposes ; that is to say, for the purpose of taking care that the pecuniary interests of the landowners of Ireland should suffer no detriment, more especially by any extension of poor law relief. Such is the history of the present famine. Does it furnish or suggest an answer to the concluding query of Dr. Hughes ?

But another famine is in preparation, and will surely come, no matter for fallacious statements of an increased breadth of tillage.

The lord of the soil had got his rent, and become a public and professed patriot. The cultivator of the soil had lost his provision of food, and gone out on the public roads for public wages. The preparations for tillage, of course, were neglected. The tenant had neither seed nor subsistence; or, if he had any small provision of either, he was soon deprived of it by the rules of the relief system. Whatever seed he might have saved from the landlord; whatever little means he possessed for making manure; whatever small capital was in his hands to work on with, were taken from him by relief committees and relieving officers. The law was laid down, and acted on very generally, that no man should obtain either gratuitous relief or public employment until he should be first completely pauperised. If he had seed corn he should consume it, if he had a cow he should sell it—and not a few of them said, as they are still saying, "if he had land he should give it up;" otherwise he could have no title to relief. This was to say, they chose rather to maintain wholly for ever after the first few months, than

to maintain partially for those few months; rather to give permanent support than temporary aid; rather to create a pauper than to assist a struggling worker. This was to declare in favour of pauperism, and to vote for another famine. I am putting no blame on the parties to this proceeding. The reasons for it were plausible in appearance. I am merely stating a fact, and charging nothing more than mistake. "We must guard against the evils," said the official authorities, "of indiscriminate relief, and avoid the risk of pauperising the feelings of the peasantry, encouraging the spirit of dependence, and training them to the trade of beggars." To me it seems it would have been safer to incur the risk of pauperising *their feelings* than the certainty of pauperising *their means;* and better even to take away *the will* to be independent than to take away *the power.* "When there are such numbers utterly destitute," said the Relief committee, "why should we give a man relief who has a barrel of oats in his possession? It would be wasting silver and cheating *the poor.*" What was it to them that the barrel of oats, if kept for seed, would have produced 12 barrels at harvest?—a return of 1,200 per cent. on the cost of feeding the man while consuming his poor little provision of corn seed.

The tenant was left without seed or substance. The effect is, that the smaller class of holdings remain uncropped and untilled, and in many cases abandoned. This class of holdings constituted a large portion of the tillage lands of Ireland. The largest class of farms are exclusively under grass. The proportion of pasture diminishes as the farm grows smaller. The smallest class of holdings are exclusively in tillage; and these are not in the usual course of preparation for being cropped, but will, to all appearance of evidence, remain waste this year. The season is passing. The potato will not be planted to any efficient extent. No adequate substitute has been adopted or found—no adequate additional quantity of corn crop, or of any crop, has been sowed, or is in course of sowing. A famine for next year is all but secured. Numbers of the small occupiers have abandoned or surrendered their holdings. The landowners are assisting the natural operation of the famine instead of arresting it—putting the tenant out of his foothold of land instead of aiding him to retain and cultivate it. In every district the tenantry are being evicted in hundreds by legal process, by compelled surrenders, by forced sales for trifling sums—the price being very frequently

paid by a receipt for fictitious or forgotten arrears. These men are being converted into "independent labourers;" and the number already evicted will form a very considerable addition to a class too numerous even now for the demands or resources of the country—too many to be absorbed—too many to be supported. Another famine comes next year—a famine of undiminished powers of destruction to act on diminished powers of resource and resistance—a famine of equal origin to act on weakened conditions. Additional numbers of the small occupiers are thrown out of occupation of land—the entire body I am speaking of are thrown out. It will not stop short of that, nor stop even there. Who can limit such an operation to ten-acre holdings, or limit it at all? They lose this land; they acquire, in lieu of it, that valuable species of Irish property, "independent labour." Stop one moment to look at the fact. Five hundred thousand families added to the two hundred and thirty thousand who form the present mass of labour—six hundred and seventy thousand adult males converted into "independent labourers"—six hundred and seventy thousand hands added to those three hundred and nineteen thousand [illegible]'v so successfully engaged in independent

labour. But surely I overstate. No one will believe this can happen until it has actually happened. No one believes in the future—no one sees to-morrow as he sees to-day. I may not be correct to the very last figure, but I am effectively correct. But is it I that say this result will come—is it I alone? Every speaker in parliament whose words carry weight forestates this result, defends, justifies, urges it; and not a voice rises to protest against the principle, the feasibility, the consequences. It is the policy and purpose of every act that is passing through the legislature. "Whereas, it is desirable that the conversion of the inferior classes of Irish landholders into independent labourers shall take effect as speedily and safely as possible, and without serious damage or danger to the English interest or the English garrison in Ireland." I read this as the preamble of every Irish act of the session. It is assumed and set down that such conversion is to take place—not partially neither, but universally. No authority assumes, no argument asserts, that the small occupiers are *too many*, and ought to be reduced. The assertion is that the small occupier is a man who ought not to be *existing*. He ought to be, and is to be henceforth, an independent labourer.

No cause, moreover, is operating against one of the class, that is not operating against all.

But the confiscation will not be limited to ten-acre holdings. There are causes in operation which will shortly render it impossible for tillage land to pay as high a rent as land under grass. Many causes—some natural, others artificial—render it impossible to produce corn in this country at as low a cost, quality for quality, as it can be produced in most others. Our corn will soon be undersold in the market by a superior article—a result rendered surer and speedier by the present increased demand for foreign corn. Shortly, too, the house-feeding of cattle can no longer be carried on. Even if the repeal of the corn duty should realise the utmost expectations of its advocates, and if there should be, consequently, a proportionate increase in the demand for beef, mutton, butter, and wool, yet the tillage land of Ireland, turned into grass land, will be fully adequate to supply that increased demand. House-feeding will be unable to compete against grass-feeding, or to pay for itself. Together with corn, therefore, the root crops will no longer be raised; a regular system of active cultivation is sustained and supported by corn alone. The agriculture that employs and main-

tains millions will leave the land, and an agriculture that employs only thousands will take its place. Ireland will become a pasture ground once again, as it was before, and its agricultural population of tillage farmers and labourers will decay and die out by degrees, or vanish and become extinct at once; even as heretofore, from the same cause, in many times and countries, populations as numerous, melting away by a rapid mortality, or mouldering out by slow but sure decay, have perished and passed away from the earth; for classes of people, nor entire populations, nor nations themselves, are not fixed or immortal, anymore than the individual men that compose them.

The eight thousand individuals who are owners of Ireland by divine right and the grant of God, confirmed (*by themselves*) in sundry successive acts of parliament, have a full view of these coming results I have stated, and have distinctly declared their intention of serving notice to quit on the people of Ireland. Bernal Osborne states that the small landlords are unable (*after having paid their rents*) to support themselves out of the land, and that they must be completely got rid of. The landowners have adopted the process of depopulating the island,

and are pressing it forward to their own destruction or to ours. They are declaring that they and we can no longer live together in this land. They are enforcing self-defence on us. They are, at least, forcing on us the question of submission or resistance; and I, for one shall give my vote for resistance.

Before I examine that question, and state what I conceive to be the true grounds, limits, and mode of resistance, I purpose making one other and last appeal to the landowners to adopt the only course that can now save a struggle.

A NATIONAL COUNCIL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "NATION."

TINAKILL, ABBEYLEIX,
Tuesday, 25th May.

Sir,—In the leading article of last Saturday's *Nation*, it is stated that the "Reproductive Committee" has changed its name, enlarged its basis, and constituted itself into what the writer would seem desirous to consider to be the nucleus of a "National Council." He seems also to attach an importance to the transaction, of which, I fear, it is wholly undeserving.

The *Nation* gives no report. I have seen none elsewhere of the proeedings of the meeting at which the alleged alterations were made. I know nothing, therefore, of the name, nature, principles, or purpose, of the new association into which the committee has resolved itself. I write, consequently, in ignorance, and on mere supposition. But I know that of necessity it will consist effectively, if not avowedly, of landowners only. Its composition and character will be determined and limited as strictly by circum-

stances as they could by formal rule of constitution. Originating in Dublin, without any virtual constituency throughout the country to empower or support, formed by its own private act, not by public action, it will never, in public estimation, be anything more than an association of landowners, and it will be practical wisdom to attempt no revolt against a public decision, and to assume no other character or functions than those which general opinion will have certainly assigned to it. Should it be able to establish and extend itself, a few individuals from other classes might doubtless be induced to join it—a few mercantile and professional men, tradesmen, and tenant-farmers; but never in sufficient number to enable it to assume the character, or exercise the functions of a National Council. Let it profess to be, what in fact, it is, an association of landed proprietors, and pretend to be nothing more. This will be its true and most effective policy. But no association of landowners, acting alone, can settle a single question of all those which are now fermenting in every house and every heart throughout the island. Be its objects what they may, the noblest or meanest, the greatest or pettiest, not one of them can be effected without the assent and aid of those who

occupy the soil and inhabit the land, and who will continue to be occupiers and inhabitants in despite and defiance of open force or covert fraud, of avowed enemies or hollow friends.

If its founders, however, be honest, earnest and capable, and should they succeed in obtaining the adhesion of any considerable number of the landed proprietors, the nascent association may be made to form one component part of a National Council, of which the Commons of Ireland—tenant-farmers and trading classes—would constitute the other portion.

As the most ready and feasible mode that occurs to me of organizing such Council, I beg to present, for consideration and correction, the hasty draft of plan which is stated in the following suggestions:

1. That the "Reproductive Committee" do immediately constitute itself into an association of landowners, to be composed exclusively of Irish landed proprietors.

2. That should such proposed association of landowners become too numerous to act as a deliberative assembly, it shall appoint a Managing Committee of one or two hundred members, empowered and instructed to assume the office of standing, and speaking, and acting, as the

accredited organ of the landed proprietors of Ireland.

3. That a tenant-league, or association of tenant-farmers be formed with as little delay as possible, in each of the several counties of Ireland.

4. That every such county league of tenant-farmers shall appoint a managing committee of not less than *five* nor more than *twelve* members —the number to be fixed according to the extent and population of the county.

5. That a trade society, for the revival and promotion of Irish manufacture, be established in each of the thirty most populous cities and towns of the kingdom.

6. That every such trade society shall appoint a secretary, or a president and secretary, or a managing Committee of from three to eight members, according to the greater or smaller population of the town or city.

7. That these tenant-league committees, trade committees, and trade officers, either under special powers and instructions to that effect, if allowed by the Convention Act or otherwise, through the concurrence of accidental circumstances, or other perfectly legal and moral contrivance, shall assemble together in Dublin,

to consult and determine upon such questions affecting the interests of the tenant-farmers and trading classes of Ireland, as may be brought before them, and shall, further, be empowered (or permitted) to treat, confer, and enter into agreement with the landowners' association on all those seveal questions.

8. That those committees be further vested with full powers (or allowed full permission) to hold such conference with the landed proprietors in whatever mode may be found most eligible and convenient, and to make such agreement as aforesaid, in whatever form may be deemed most conclusive and satisfactory, and on such guarantees and securities as may be considered sufficient.

This is a very hurried and imperfect sketch of my ideas on the mode in which I think a National Council might be constituted, such as the people of Irelend would acknowledge and accept in that character. The primary proceeding of forming the several tenant-leagues and trade societies is the only essential portion of the plan. There are many modes in which the ulterior proceedings might be conducted without violating the Convention Act. If the society formed by the "Reproductive Committee" re-

commend and carry out this proceedi
some analogous proceeding, they will ha
served well of their country, saved and str
ened their own class, and done a deed in h

THE RIGHTS OF IRELAND.

(From the first number of the *Irish Felon*, June 24th, 1848).

To found a paper like the *Irish Felon*, for the mere purpose, in whole or in part, of making a fortune or making a farthing, would be a felon's crime indeed, deserving no hero's doom, lamented death or honoured exile, but death on the scaffold, amid the scoff and scorn of the world. For years we have seen men in Ireland alternately trading on the government and trading on the country, and making money by both; and you do not imagine, perhaps, to what degree the public mind has been affected with a feeling of suspicion by the circumstance—a feeling deepened, extended and justified, by all we see or know of ourselves. For, indeed, the craving to get money—the niggard reluctance to give money—the coward fear of losing or laying out money—is the bad and coarse point that is most apparent in the character of all ranks and classes of our people; and I often fear it argues an utter absence of all heroism from our national tempera-

ment, and of all the romantic passions, whether public or private. In other countries men marry for love; in Ireland they marry for money. Elsewhere they serve their country for their country's thanks or their country's tears—here they do it for their country's money. At this very time, when Ireland, to all appearance, is stripping for her last struggle on this side of ages, there are, I am convinced, many persons among the middle classes who refuse to fall into the national march, or countenance the national movement, merely from the hope—in most cases as vain as it is vile—of obtaining some petty government place; or from the fear of losing some beggarly employment or emolument; and I know myself in this country many and many a sturdy and comfortable farmer who refuses to furnish himself with a pike, merely and solely because it would cost him two shillings. For ourselves—I say nothing of others—let us aim at better rewards than mere money rewards. Better and higher rewards has Ireland in her hands. If we succeed, we shall obtain these; and if we do not succeed, we shall deserve none. In cases like this, the greatest crime that man can commit is the crime of failure. I am convinced it has become essential to our fame and

our effectiveness—to the success of our cause and the character of our country, to keep clear and secure ourselves from the suspicion, that our only object may be nothing more than a long and lucrative agitation. The Confederation pledged its members to accept no office or place of profit from an English government. That pledge was efficient, perhaps, for its own professed purposes, but not for others—for an "agitation" has places and profits of its own to bestow. Let them say of us whatever else they will—let them call us felons, and treat us as such, but let them not, at least, have the power to call us swindlers. We may be famous: let us not become infamous.

For these and other still more important reasons, needless to be stated as yet, I certainly could have wished that this journal had been established on a subscribed capital, and the effective ownership vested in a joint-stock company of, say eight hundred or a thousand proprietors. What is there to hinder that this arrangement should be made even now? It would contain securities, and create powers, which no other could offer or pretend to. There are, indeed, some practical difficulties in the way, but they might easily, I think, be overcome. Whether any such arrangement be adopted or

not, I believe, however, that I am fully warranted in desiring—and I think our own true interest and honour concur in demanding—that the *Felon* office shall not be a commercial establishment, but organised and animated as a great political association. And, for my part, I enter it with the hope and determination to make it an armed post, a fortress for freedom to be, perhaps, taken and retaken again, and yet again; but never to surrender, nor stoop its flag, till that flag shall float above a liberated nation.

Without agreement as to our objects we cannot agree on the course we should follow. It is requisite the paper should have but one purpose; and the public should understand what that purpose is. Mine is not to repeal the Union, or restore Eighty-two. This is not the year '82 this is the year '48. For repeal I never went into "Agitation" and will not go into insurrection. On that questien I refuse to arm, or to act in any mode; and the country refuses. O'Connell made no mistake when he pronounced it not worth the price of one drop of blood; and for myself, I regret it was not left in the hands of Conciliation Hall, whose lawful property it was and is. Moral force and Repeal, the means and the purpose, were just fitted to each other—*Arcades ambo*,

balmy Arcadians both. When the means were limited, it was only proper and necessary to limit the purpose. When the means were enlarged, that purpose ought to have been enlarged also. Repeal, in its vulgar meaning, I look on as utterly impracticable by any mode of action whatever; and the constitution of '82 was absurd, worthless, and worse than worthless. The English government will never concede or surrender to any species of moral force whatsoever; and the country-peasantry will never arm and fight for it—neither will I. If I am to stake life and fame it must assuredly be for something better and greater, more likely to last, more likely to succeed, and better worth success. And a stronger passion, a higher purpose, a nobler and more needful enterprise is fermenting the hearts of the people. A mightier question moves Ireland to-day than that of merely repealing the Act of Union. Not the constitution that Wolfe Tone died to abolish, but the constitution that Tone died to obtain—independence; full and absolute independence for this island, and for every man within this island. Into no movement that would leave an enemy's garrison in possession of all our lands, masters of our liberties, our lives, and all our means of life and

happiness—into no such movement will a single man of the greycoats enter with an armed hand, whatever the town population may do. On a wider fighting field, with stronger positions and greater resources than are afforded by the paltry question of Repeal, must we close for our final struggle with England, or sink and surrender.

Ireland her own—Ireland her own, and all therein, from the sod to the sky. The soil of Ireland for the people of Ireland, to have and hold from God alone who gave it—to have and to hold to them and their heirs for ever, without suit or service, faith or fealty, rent or render, to any power under Heaven. From a worse bondage than the bondage of any foreign government—from a dominion more grievous and grinding than the dominion of England in its worst days—from the cruellest tyranny that ever yet held its vulture clutch on the body and soul of a country—from the robber rights and robber rule that have turned us into slaves and beggars in the land which God gave us for ours—Deliverance, oh Lord, Deliverance or death—Deliverance, or this island a desert. This is the one prayer, and terrible need, and real passion of Ireland to-day, as it has been for ages. Now, at last it begins to shape into defined and desperate

purpose; and into it all meaner and smaller purposes must settle and merge. It might have been kept in abeyance, and away from the sight of the sun—aye, even till this old native race had been finally conquered out and extinguished, *sub silentio*, without noise or notice. But once propounded and proclaimed as a principle, not in the dust of remote country districts, but loudly and proudly in the tribunes of the capital, it must now be accepted and declared as the first and main Article of Association in the National Covenant of organised defence and armed resistance: as the principle to take ground, and stand, and fight upon. When a greater and more ennobling enterprise is on foot, every inferior and feebler project or proceeding will soon be left in the hands of old women, of dastards, imposters, swindlers, and imbeciles. All the strength and manhood of the island—all the courage, energies, and ambition—all the passion, heroism, and chivalry—all the strong men and the strong minds—all those things that make revolutions will quickly desert it, and throw themselves into the great movement, throng into the larger and loftier undertaking, and flock round the banner that flies nearest the sky. There go the young, the gallant, the

gifted, and the daring; and there, too, go the wise. For wisdom knows that in national action *littleness* is more fatal than the wildest rashness; the greatness of object is essential to greatness of effort, strength, and success; that a revolution ought never to take its stand on low or narrow ground, but seize on the broadest and highest ground it can lay hands on; and that a petty enterprise seldom succeeds. Had America aimed or declared for less than independence, she would, probably, have failed, and been a fettered slave to-day.

Not to repeal the Union, then, but the conquest—not to disturb or dismantle the empire, but to abolish it utterly for ever—not to fall back on '82, but act up to '48—not to resume or restore an old constitution, but found a new nation and raise up a free people, and strong as well as free, and secure as well as strong, based on a peasantry rooted like rocks in the soil of the land—this is my object, as I hope it is yours; and this, you may be assured, is the easier as it is the nobler and the more pressing enterprise. For Repeal, all the moral means at our disposal have in turns been used, abused, and abandoned. All the military means it can command will fail as utterly. Compare the two questions. Repeal

would require a national organization ; a central representative authority, formally elected; a regular army, a regulated war of concentrated action and combined movement. On the other question all circumstances differ, as I could easily show you. But I have gone into this portion of the subject prematurely and unawares, and here I stop—being reluctant, besides, to trespass too long on the time of her Majesty's legal and military advisers.

The principle I state, and mean to stand upon, is this, that the entire ownership of Ireland, moral and material, up to the sun and down to the centre, is vested of right in the people of Ireland; that they, and none but they are the land-owners and law-makers of this island ; that all laws are null and void not made by them, and all titles to land invalid not conferred or confirmed by them; and that this full right of ownership may and ought to be asserted and enforced by any and all means which God has put in the power of man. In other, if not plainer words, I hold and maintain that the entire soil of a country belongs of right to the entire people of that country, and is the rightful property, not of any one class, but of the nation at large, in full effective possession, to let to whom they will, on

whatever tenures, terms, rents, services and conditions they will; one condition, however, being unavoidable and essential, the condition that the tenant shall bear full, true, and undivided fealty and allegiance to the nation, and the laws of the nation, whose land he holds, and own no allegiance whatsoever to any other prince, power, or people, or any obligation of obedience or respect to their will, orders or laws. I hold further, and firmly believe, that the enjoyment by the people of this right of first ownership in the soil, is essential to the vigour and vitality of all other rights; to their validity, efficacy, and value; to their secure possession and safe exercise. For let no people deceive themselves, or be deceived by the words and colours, and phrases, and form of a mock freedom, by constitutions, and charters, and articles and franchises. These things are paper and parchment, waste and worthless. Let laws and institutions say what they will, this fact will be stronger than all laws, and prevail against them—the fact that those who own your lands will make your laws, and command your liberties and your lives. But this is tyranny and slavery; tyranny in its widest scope and worst shape; slavery of body and soul, from the cradle to the coffin—slavery with all its

horrors, and with none of its physical comforts and security; even as it is in Ireland, where the whole community is made up of tyrants, slaves, and slave-drivers. A people whose lands and lives are thus in the keeping and custody of others, instead of in their own, are not in a position of common safety. The Irish famine of '46 is example and proof. The corn crops were sufficient to feed the island. But the landlords *would* have their rents, in spite of famine and defiance of fever. They took the whole harvest and left hunger to those who raised it. Had the people of Ireland been the landlords of Ireland, not a human creature would have died of hunger, nor the failure of the potato been considered a matter of any consequence.

There are, however, many landlords, perhaps, and certainly a few, not fairly chargeable with the crimes of their orders; and you may think it hard they should lose their lands. But recollect the principle I assert would make Ireland, *in fact* as she is *of right*, mistress and queen of all those lands; that she, poor lady, had ever a soft heart and grateful disposition; and that she may, if she please, in reward of allegiance, confer new titles or confirm the old. Let us crown her a queen; and then—let her do with her lands as a queen may do.

In the case of any existing interest, of what nature soever, I feel assured that no question but one would need to be answered. Does the owner of that interest assent to swear allegiance to the people of Ireland, and to hold in fee from the Irish nation? If he assent he may be assured he will suffer no loss. No eventual or permanent loss I mean; for some temporary loss he must assuredly suffer. But such loss would be incidental and inevitable to any armed insurrection whatever, no matter on what principle the right of resistance should be resorted to. If he refuses, then I say—away with him—out of this land with him—himself and all his robber rights, and all the things himself and his rights have brought into our island—blood and tears, and famine, and the fever that goes with famine.

Between the relative merits and importance of the two rights, the people's right to the land, and their right to legislation, I do not mean or wish to institute any comparison. I am far, indeed, from desirous to put the two rights in competition or contrast, for I consider each alike as the natural complement of the other, necessary to its theoretical completeness and practical efficacy. But considering them for a moment as distinct, I do mean to assert this—that the land question

contains, and the legislative question does *not* contain, the materials from which victory is manufactured; and that, therefore, if we be truly in earnest, and determined on success, it is on the former question, and not on the latter, we must take our stand, fling out our banner, and hurl down to England our gage of battle. Victory follows that banner alone—that, and no other.

This island is ours, and have it we will, if the leaders be but true to the people, and the people be true to themselves.

The rights of property may be pleaded. No one has a higher respect for the real rights of property than I have; but I do not class among them the robber's right, by which the lands of this country are now held in fee from the British crown. I acknowledge no right of property in a small class which goes to abrogate the rights of a numerous people. I acknowledge no right of property in eight thousand persons, be they noble or ignoble, which takes away all rights of property, security, independence, and existence itself, from a population of eight millions, and stands in bar to all the political rights of the island, and all the social rights of its inhabitants. I acknowledge no right of property which takes the food

of millions, and gives them a famine—which denies to the peasant the right of a home, and concedes, in exchange, the right of a workhouse. I deny and challenge all such rights, howsoever founded or enforced. I challenge them, as founded only on the code of the brigand, and enforced only by the sanction of the hangman. Against them I assert the true and indefeasible right of property—the right of our people to live in it in comfort, security, and independence, and to live in it by their own labour, on their own land, as God and nature meant them to do. Against them I shall array, if I can, all the forces that yet remain in this island. And against them I am determined to make war,—to their destruction or my own.

These are my principles and views. I shall have other opportunities to develop and defend them. I have some few other requisitions to make, but I choose to defer them for other reasons besides want of time and space. Our first business, before we can advance a step, is to fix our own footing and make good our position. That once done, this contest must, if possible, be brought to a speedy close.

TO THE IRISH CONFEDERATE AND REPEAL CLUBS.

(From the *Irish Felon*, 1st July, 1848.)

[The paper that follows was written in the last week of January, 1847—just one year and five months ago—and was forwarded to one of the leading members of the Confederation for private circulation among the council of that body.

It requires to be recollected that I was addressing a particular and picked audience, and was consequently entitled to *assume* things which it would be necessary to *prove* in addressing the general public. I assume, for example, that "moral means" alone are incompetent to achieve repeal, because I believed that this was admitted by those I wrote for.

I see no reason to prevent me mentioning that, in about a month from the date and delivery of my paper, I received a letter from John Mitchel stating that, on perusal and consideration of its contents, he had fully adopted my views, and

that he meant to act on them so soon as occasion should fit and serve.

It is scarcely needful to state that the measure I wished to have substituted for a simple Repeal of the Union was absolute independence, with *abolition* of the tenures by which the lands of this country are now holden in fee from the British crown.

It will be seen that the present paper was to have been followed by a second. That second was written, but it assumed the form of a private correspondence, addressed to several members of the Confederation and to others—the greater portion of it to John Mitchel, between whom and myself there was from the first an almost perfect agreement. May his fetters weigh light and his spirit live among us!]

January 25th, 1847.

In putting to paper the following ideas on the course of action which the Irish Confederation ought to take—as I am convinced it must soon and speedily fix on that course in some more determined shape and precise terms than it has yet thought fit to adopt—I wish it to be understood and apparent that I do not mean, and have not time, to draw out anything that can purport

to be a perfect and complete statement of my views on the subject—and still less to exhibit in detail the principles on which they are based, or the argument in support of them. My sole wish or attention is to *suggest*. Any attempt to *convert* or *convince* would be useless.

Individuals are never converted; they must convert themselves. Men are moved only in masses; and it is easier to convert a million of men than a single man. But neither is the attempt necessary. To you, or any of those for whom this paper is intended, the end of the clue-line is enough. You will be able, *if you choose*, to follow it out yourself. To lead you on, link by link, would be needless and absurd.

To anyone who considers their speeches, resolutions, and proceedings, it will, I think, appear manifest and marked, as it does to me, that the "seceders" have gone into organized action upon mere vague impulse and general feeling; with their objects undefined, their principles unsettled, their course unmarked; without any determinate plan, or, consequently, any fixed purpose—for no purpose can long remain fixed, but must be ever veering and wavering, without a plan to guide, control, and sustain it; and a purpose without a plan to confine and confirm it, is no purpose at all.

Such a plan, too, is wanting as a warrant and guarantee to yourselves and to others that your object is feasible and your means adequate; that you have *gauged* your *enterprise* and *measured* your *means;* and that the work you call on us to do will not be wasted. There are few worse things, even in the ethics or economy of private life, than labour misdirected; but what should be said of those who would, for want of a full and exact survey and calculation, mislead and exhaust the labour and means and strength of a people? It is not principles alone, however pure, nor purposes the highest and noblest, that ever command success; and few will be willing to go into a ship without chart or compass, even though it steer its course by the stars of heaven.

Assuming, therefore, as I have a clear right to assume, that the leading members of the Confederation, or a certain number of them, cannot long defer coming to some agreement among themselves as to what their objects are to be; and that some surer and better defined plan for attaining those objects must be laid down and adopted than "sixty members, reading rooms, and rosewater." I proceed to submit the following considerations:—

I. Repeal, as *commonly understood,* taken by

itself and standing alone on its own mere merits and means, is an impracticable absurdity. *Impracticable*, because it cannot be effected except by means which would dissolve the connexion altogether, any means that can be used being either too feeble or too strong—either *inadequate* or *incompatible*. *Absurd*, because both common sense and history concur in telling us that the resulting arrangement could not possibly endure nor be endured.

II. It is *impracticable*. It does not contain, nor can it command, the means of possible success. It has no force to call into action on which it can rely, whether moral, military, or mixed. Its *moral* means, acting in the mode admitted by constitution, and within the limits allowed by law, are wholly incompetent; and such as they are, they are in Mr. O'Connell's possession—to be used, abused, or not used at all.

III. That those means are incompetent I could easily show; but surely it is unnecessary. The fact of incompetency will, I think, at once be recognised, or if any one denies it, I require of him to state, in positive and precise terms, the mode of action in which those means can be made effective. The complete and ridiculous failure of every such attempt ought to be evidence

sufficient on this point. The fact, briefly stated, is this—that a "moral agitation" exhausts its whole power—its power of influencing opinion, and of producing danger, damage, and inconvenience—it exhausts this power on the country in which it takes place.

It was not England, but Ireland itself, that suffered evil and injury by our "glorious agitations" and "gorgeous ethic experiments." The most powerful moral agitation that could be "got up" in Ireland would not act upon *London.* If "emancipation" be quoted, I can prove the quotation false in application to the present case.

IV. But it is no less certain that those means, whether efficient or impotent, are, in full effect, the property of Mr. O'Connell. What may possibly have been the hasty and premature protest of the Seceders against the Repeal question, has forced him to adopt the policy of not giving it up in *terms.* I attach no blame to the Seceders for this somewhat precipitate proceeding. But the effect is, that Repeal, in its *constitutional* shape, remains still his private property, in full, effective possession, to manage or mismanage, to make much or little of, to sell or suspend, surrender or exchange, as best he can. The mass of the people can neither estimate nor

understand the points in dispute, nor the reasons for secession; and can never be brought to join what could so easily be represented as an antagonistic and hostile movement. If any member of council doubts this opinion, I challenge him to *test it.*

V. The use of *military* means, if you had them, would be *more* than adequate. Those means would do something more than repeal the Union; nor could they be limited to any such result. This might be no objection; and I mention the fact here, not as an objection, but for another and different reason, which I need not state as yet. But, in truth, on this question you possess no such means—nor can you command or create them;—neither, even if you had them, could you employ them, with success.

VI. You possess no military means. Repeal is not an armed man, but a naked beggar. You fail in finding the first and fundamental element of military force—you fail in finding *men.* The only martial population that Ireland possesses—the small farmers and labourers—will never wield a weapon in favour of Repeal. This might be enough to say; but the full and entire fact ought to be told, that you can never count again on the support of the country peasantry in any

shape or degree, on the question of Repeal. Their interest in it was never ardent; nor was it native or spontaneous, but forced and factitious. Such as it was, it is now extinct, and can never be re-created. The *small farmers*, more especially, are weary and heart-sick of Repeal, as well as of agitation—that agitation which has been called a bloodless one, but which, *to them*, was not bloodless.

VII. But even had you those means, or if you could create them—if you had at command the whole military power of the people, and the full means of a popular armament, I say you cannot use them with effect on the question of Repeal. To make it successful, your fight must be a *defensive* one. The force of England is *entrenched* and *fortified*. You must draw it out of position; break up its mass; break its trained line of march and manœuvre—its equal step and serried array. You cannot organise, or train, or discipline your own force to any point of efficiency. You must, therefore, disorganise, and untrain, and undiscipline that of the enemy; and not alone must you *unsoldier*—you must *unofficer* it also; nullify its tactique and strategy, as well as its discipline; decompose the science and system of war, and resolve them into their first elements.

You must make the hostile army a mob, as your own will be; force it to act on the *offensive*, and oblige it to undertake operations for which it was never constructed. Nothing of all this could you do *on Repeal.*

A Repeal-war should of necessity be an aggressive one on your part. You must be the attacking party. On all the questions involved in Repeal, England is *in occupation of the disputed points;* and you must assail them. You must send your force against armed positions, marshal your men for a stricken field, and full in its front meet England's might in unbroken mass on its ordered march. But further and finally, you must get time and licence, for preparing, enlisting, organising, drilling. A Repeal-war would have to be *prepared* in presence of the enemy. Need I point to "Ulster on your flank?" Enough of this, and far more was needed. I doubt if a single man ever held the belief *full and firm*, that Ireland could any time be brought to buckle a belt and march out for Repeal. The tone and topics adopted by the *Nation* in '43 and '44 I never attributed to any thing but this—that a "glorious agitation" *affords no poetry*, while insurrection *does*. It was the mere craving of genius for a *magnificent* subject, instead of a *mean* one.

VIII. There is yet another class of means and mode of force better founded in moral right, and more efficient in action, than either agitation or military insurrection. I can find no fit and definite name for it on the spur of the moment. Its theory may briefly be stated as founded on the principle of natural law—a principle beyond dispute, denial or doubt:—

I. That no man has a right to assume or claim any species of authority or jurisdiction whatsoever over any other man, against the will, or without the consent, of that other.

II. That should he attempt to exercise such assumed authority over another man, without his consent, that other is not bound to obey.

III. And that, should he take proceeding for enforcing obedience, such proceeding may be lawfully, and ought to be resisted by any and every means and mode of force whatsoever.

This is the right expression of the principle in its first form; and this principle, so expressed, is the primitive nucleus round which a nation gathers and grows. Enlarged into size and expanded into shape sufficient to give ground for a

people to stand upon, and to fit it for operation, the principle I state is this—that every district, community, or nation of men is owner of itself; and can never, of right, be bound to submit to be governed by another people.

Its practical assertion forms the third mode of action which this country might have recourse to, and consists :—

I. In refusal to obedience to usurped authority.

II. In maintaining and defending such refusal of obedience.

III. In resisting every attempt to exercise such usurped authority, and every proceeding adopted to enforce obedience.

IV. In taking quiet and peaceable possession of all the rights and powers of government, and in proceeding quietly to exercise them.

V. In maintaining and defending the exercise of such rights and powers, should it be attacked.

IX. I have just thought of *a name* for this system of means, and, for want of a better, I may call it *moral insurrection.* The difference between it and *true military* insurrection amounts to nothing more, in practical effect, than the

difference between the *defensive* and the *aggressive* use of physical force—a difference, however, which is often important, whether as regards moral right or mechanical efficacy.

X. As an instrument for effecting Repeal, this class of means is liable to the fatal objection stated against the preceding class. The right of moral insurrection is worthless without a military force to sustain it, and unless you are prepared and willing to use that force. On the *question of Repeal*, you have no such force. That question is *too far away* from the hearts of the peasantry. They do not *feel*, and scarcely *understand* it. They may be brought to *see its light*, but never to *feel its heat*. Other circumstances, too, render the right not available in favour of Repeal. You never could organise such an insurrection on that question.

The practical assertion of the right consists of two parts:—

I. *Abolition* of British government.

II. *Formation* of a national one.

(I.) How would you proceed to accomplish the former? By a *general* refusal to obey the *entire* existing law? Impossible. You could not do this even *mentally* to your own satisfaction; much less could you do it in actual fact. Or by

selecting and seizing some one particular law to take your stand on, trample down and nullify? What law? Name it. The law you select for assailing must have four requisites:—first, it must form no part of the moral code; second, it must be essential to government—a part of its substance, not a mere accident—one the abrogation of which would be an abrogation of the sovereign; third, it must be one easily disobeyed; and fourth, difficult to enforce; in other words, a law that would *help* to repeal itself. There is none such to serve the purpose of *Repeal.* In Ireland, *unluckily*, there is no direct and general state-tax, payment of which might be refused and resisted. (2) The second component part of the system—formation of a national government—is rendered impossible by the circumstance that the owners of the soil are not on your side, and are not *Irish*, but English all, in blood and feeling.

XI. If those men could now at length be brought to adopt and acknowledge Ireland as their own mother-country, and to give you their adhesion and support, this latter mode of moral insurrection might be put in action with success. To try the experiment of inducing them to do so, seems to be the present policy and forlorn

hope of the confederation, and of the "NATION." I am quite willing to join in trying that experiment, PROVIDED it be based and conducted on the condition that the *commons* of Ireland, as well as its *nobles*, be consulted and cared for;—that the *landowners* will consent and agree to take the landholders into council—to admit them as portion of the "Irish Party"—making of that "party" a great national league—and, finally, to frame and subscribe terms of accommodation and amnesty for the past, and articles of agreement for the future, between themselves and the tenants of the soil—one of those articles to be security of tenure in some effective shape or other to the present occupiers of land. On this basis, and no other, would I be willing to try the experiment; but *not* to make it a "life's labour." Until the—day of——am I willing to try it—no longer.

XII. But the success of that experiment is scarce to be hoped—especially now that the famine here has been recognised as an "imperial calamity"—and the policy of Confederation contains, *apparently*, no *dernier resort*,—nor its proceedings any preparation for having recourse to it. The policy I wish and mean to press on your attention *does* contain such *dernier resort*;

and the course of proceeding I would fain have the Confederation adopt contains and comprises within it the *preparatory* movement.

XIII. Repeal is not alone *impracticable*. As commonly understood—a simple repeal of the act of Union—it is an *absurdity*. The resulting connexion and state of things could neither endure nor be endured. Reflection tells us so,—history agrees. Two independent, co-equal, and *sovereign* Legislatures, forming one state under one crown, is an arrangement repugnant alike to common sense and experience. Reason repudiates, and history never heard of it. Two wheels in the same machine, of equal power, independent, unconnected, and not under control of the same prime mover, would form a better arrangement. Inanimate wheels, perchance, *might* work together; but under the action of humane interests and passions, separate *sovereign* legislatures never could.

XIV. No mode of connexion between the kingdoms could be solid, desirable, or lasting, except a *federal union*, such as that existing between New York and Pennsylvania. But a federal union must be the result of *negotiation* and agreement between the federating parties. I deny the competency of the Imperial (British)

Parliament to frame the act, or make the terms of federation. But, in order to negotiate, the parties must stand on equal terms, and each be *independent* of the other. *Independence*, therefore, full and entire independence, is a necessary preliminary to any permanent or satisfactory arrangement with Britain. The steps are:—independence, negotiation, federal union. What the terms should be, I will not state—I dislike needless theorising.

XV. Do not suppose I am insisting on useless *forms*. My object is very different. I think every one should familiarize his mind to the foregoing proceeding; for such *is* the proceeding, or one analogous which must eventually be adopted. You will NEVER, in form of law, repeal the act of Union. *Never*, while the sun sits in heaven, and the laws of nature are in action. *Never*, before night goes down on the last day.

XVI. But a declaration of independence is yet far away—at least in the distance that is measured by *events*, if not in the distance that is measured by *days*. I return to Repeal.

XVII. I sum up by again asserting that Repeal is destitute of all intrinsic force, and that, *standing alone*, on its own mere merits, it does not furnish or command the means of success.

XVIII. Indeed so plainly apparent is the impossibility of carrying repeal, that its best and truest leaders are forced to throw themselves on a blind and helpless appeal to *futurity*. Broad daylight is on the present, and shows too clearly there is neither means nor hope. The future is dark; and the dark is full of shadows, which fancy may shape to what forms it will; and folly may take the phantoms to be real. But men may keep theorising and dreaming too long, and building up, or restoring, an airy and ideal nationality, which *time* is wearing down, and wasting away, faster than they can work it up; and when they awake from their dreams they will find, I fear, that one other people has gone out of the world, as nations and races have gone ere now.

XIX. For a revolution is beginning to begin which will leave Ireland *without a people*, unless it be met and conquered by a revolution which will leave it without landlords. The operation of this terrible famine will turn half the small tillage-farmers—the sole strength and hope of this island—into mere labourers working for wages. The operation of the measure of repealing the corn duties—rendered more sure and speedy by the present sudden increase of demand

for foreign corn—will leave landless the remainder. Heretofore tillage land has been able to pay a higher rent than grass land. Henceforth it will be the reverse—more especially should the potato have finally failed or disappeared. The only bar that existed to the universal removal of the small tillage farmer, the landlord's own personal interest in retaining him—is now gone. The result is no matter of doubt; and even if it were doubtful, it ought to be provided against. Else will Ireland lose the only weapon she possesses that would conquer or cow the English Government—else, too, will she cease to have a people—for a population of pauperised labourers is not a people. I fear the English Government, and *that English garrison* who say they own *our* soil, have a full view of their opportunity, and are determined to take advantage of it. We hear of nothing but plans and schemes to absorb surplus labour—the surplus labour that is in process of creation. The farmers are to pass over into the condition of labourers, and to be supported during their passage. Ireland is playing out her last game, and is she then, after all, to be checkmated, conquered, abolished? Not if her leaders and people be true, and no cravens. True, not to

any petty objects of personal distinction or personal pelf—true, not to the foreign gang who call Ireland their own, and hold our lands by the robber's right—but true to their country and to themselves. One move will save checkmate. By one move alone you can meet and match, and by that same move you can checkmate England. One move alone can save the stakes now, and among those stakes are the name and fame of you and yours. Men have given to you their faith, and hearts, and hopes for your bold bearing and bold words. Even I myself am now trusting to you and to *your* help, instead of looking round for other help and another course. Are you ready to redeem your own words, pledged in the sunshine of summer weather—are you ready to redeem now in this of sadness and storm? and to justify our faith when we followed your leading? Are you up to the mark and work of this one hour, in lieu of the "life's labour" you promise? *Strip*, then, and bid Ireland strip. *Now or never*—if, indeed, it be not too late. Oh, for one year of the bulldog soul of England! Oh, for one year of Davis now! Whatever he may have thought *in the autumn of* '43, his voice would now have been louder than mine, and to say what mine is too feeble to say. *He* would not have lain dreaming

while Ireland was being trodden down, and her people conquered finally and for ever. For England *is now actually winning her crowning and* DECISIVE victory over us and ours for ages coming.

XX. To prevent this result, and at the same time to achieve independence—the only form in which Repeal can ever be carried—there is, I am convinced, but one way alone; and that is to link Repeal to some other question, like a railway carriage to the engine; some question possessing the intrinsic strength which Repeal wants; and strong enough to carry both itself and Repeal together—if any such question can be found.

And such a question there is in the land. One ready prepared—ages have been preparing it. An engine ready-made—one, too, that will generate its own steam without cost or care—a self-acting engine, if once the fire be kindled, and the fuel to kindle—the sparks for the kindling are everywhere. Repeal had always to be *dragged*. This I speak of will *carry itself*, as the cannon ball carries itself down the hill.

What the other question is I may possibly state very briefly in another paper.

Yet if its name and general character be not already known, I have lost my labour.

THE FAITH OF A FELON.

(From the *Irish Felon*, July 8th, 1848.)

When Mr. Duffy expected arrest, some weeks ago, he drew up his profession of principles, "The Creed of *The Nation*." Under influences of similar feelings and considerations, though not exactly the same, nor excited by circumstances altogether alike, I hasten to put my own principles upon record. Until yesterday I did not intend to have done this for some weeks to come. The statement or confession of faith that follows I could have wished for time to make more correct and complete. It is ill-framed, ill-connected, and wants completeness. But, even such as it stands, I do firmly believe that it carries the fortunes of Ireland;—and even such as it stands, I now send it forth to its fate, to conquer or be conquered. It may be master of Ireland and make her a Queen;—it may lie in the dust and perish with her people.

Here, then, is the confession and faith of A FELON.

Years ago I perceived that the English con-

quest consisted of two parts combined into one whole,—the conquest of our liberties, the conquest of our lands.

I saw clearly that the re-conquest of our liberties would be incomplete and worthless without the re-conquest of our lands,—would not, necessarily, involve or produce that of our lands, and could not, on its own means, be possibly achieved; while the re-conquest of our lands would involve the other—would, at least, be complete in itself, and adequate to its own purposes; and could *possibly*, if not easily, be achieved.

The lands were owned by the conquering race, or by traitors to the conquered race. They were *occupied* by the native people, or by settlers who had mingled and merged.

I selected, as the *mode* of re-conquest,—to refuse payment of rent, and resist process of ejectment.

In that mode I determined to effect the re-conquest, and staked on it all my hopes, here and hereafter—my hopes of an effective life and an eternal epitaph.

It almost seemed to me as if the Young Ireland party, the quarrel, the secession, the Confederation, had all been specially pre-ordained and

produced in order to aid me. My faith in the men who formed the Council of that body was then unbounded. My faith in them still is as firm as ever, though somewhat more measured. In the paper I published last week, and in a private correspondence that ensued with some of its members, I proposed that they should merge the Repeal question in a mightier project—that of wresting this island from English rule altogether, in the only mode in which it could possibly be achieved. I endeavoured to show them they were only keeping up a feeble and ineffectual fire from a foolish distance, upon the *English Government,* which stands out of reach and beyond our power; and urged them to wheel their batteries round and bend them on the *English Garrison* of landlords, who stand there within our hands, scattered, isolated, and helpless, girdled round by the might of a people. Except two or three of them, all refused at the time, and have persisted in refusing until now. They wanted an alliance with the landowners. They chose to consider them as Irishmen, and imagined they could induce them to hoist the green flag. They wished to preserve an Aristocracy. They desired, not a democratic, but merely a national revolution. Who imputes blame to them for

this? Whoever does so will not have me to join him. I have no feeling but one of respect for the motives that caused reluctance and delay. That delay, however, I consider as a matter of deep regret. Had the Confederation, in the May or June of '47, thrown heart and mind and means and might into the movement I pointed out, they would have made it successful, and settled for once and for ever all quarrels and questions between us and England.

The opinions I then stated, and which I yet stand firm to, are these:—

I. That, in order to save their own lives, the occupying tenants of the soil of Ireland ought, next autumn, to refuse all rent and arrears of rent then due, beyond and except the value of the overplus of harvest produce remaining in their hands after having deducted and reserved a due and full provision for their own subsistence during the next ensuing twelve months.

II. That they ought to refuse and resist being made beggars, landless and houseless, under the English law of ejectment.

III. That they ought further, *on principle*, to refuse ALL rent to the present usurping proprietors, until the people, the true proprietors (or lords paramount, in legal parlance), have, in

national congress, or convention, decided *what* rents they are to pay, and *to whom* they are to pay them.

IV. And that the people, on grounds of *policy* and *economy*, ought to decide (as a general rule, admitting of reservations) that those rents shall be paid *to themselves*, the people, for public purposes, and for behoof and benefit of them, the entire general people.

These are the principles, as clearly and fully stated as limit of time will allow, which I advise Ireland to adopt at once, and at once to arm for. Should the people accept and adhere to them, the English goyernment will then have to choose whether to surrender the Irish landlords, or to support them with the armed power of the empire.

If it refuse to incur the odium and expense, and to peril the safety of England in a social war of extermination, then the landlords are nobodies, the people are lords of the land, a mighty social revolution is accomplished, and the foundations of a national revolution surely laid. If it should, on the other hand, determine to come to the rescue and relief of its garrison—elect to force their rents and enforce their rights by infantry, cavalry, and cannon, and attempt to lift and carry the whole harvest of Ireland—a

somewhat *heavy* undertaking, which might become a *hot* one, too—then I, at least, for one, am prepared to bow with humble resignation to the dispensations of Providence. Welcome be the will of God. We must only try to keep our harvest, to offer a peaceful, passive resistance, to barricade the island, to break up the roads, to break down the bridges—and, should need be, and favourable occasions offer, surely we may venture to try the steel. Other approved modes of moral resistance might gradually be added to these, according as we should become trained to the system: and all combined, I imagine, and well worked, might possibly task the strength and break the heart of the empire.

Into *artistic* details, however, I need not, and do not choose, to enter for the present.

It has been said to me that such a war, on the principles I propose, would be looked on with detestation by Europe. I assert the contrary: I say such a war would propagate itself throughout Europe. Mark the words of this prophecy; —the principle I propound goes to the foundations of Europe, and sooner or later, will cause Europe to outrise. Mankind will yet be masters of the earth. The right of the people to make the laws—this produced the first great modern earth-

quake, whose latest shocks, even now, are heaving in the heart of the world. The right of the people to own the land—this will produce the next. Train your hands, and your sons' hands, gentlemen of earth, for you and they will yet have to use them. I want to put Ireland foremost, in the van of the world, at the head of the nations —to set her aloft in the blaze of the sun, and to make her for ages the lode star of history. Will she take the path I point out—the path to be free, and famed, and feared, and followed—the path that goes sunward? Or, onward to the end of time, will wretched Ireland ever come limping and lagging hindmost? Events must answer that. It is a question I almost fear to look full in the face. The soul of this island seems to sink where that of another country would soar. The people sank and surrendered to the famine instead of growing savage, as any other people would have done.

I am reminded that there are few persons now who trouble themselves about the "conquest," and there may be many—I know there are some —who assent to the two first of the four principles I have stated, and are willing to accept them as the grounds of an armed movement; but who object to the last two of them. I am

advised to summon the land tenants of Ireland up in battle-array for an armed struggle in defence of their rights of life and subsistence, without asserting any greater or more comprehensive right. I distinctly refuse to do so. I refuse to narrow the case and claim of this island into any such petty dimensions, or to found it on the rogue's or the beggar's plea, the plea of necessity. Not as a starving bandit or desperate beggar who demands, to save life, what does not belong to him, do I wish Ireland to stand up, but as a decrowned Queen, who claims back her own with an armed hand. I attest and urge the plea of utter and desperate necessity to fortify her claim, but not to found it. I rest it on no temporary and passing conditions, but on principles that are permanent, and imperishable and universal;—available to all times and to all countries, as well as to our own,—I pierce through the upper stratum of occasional and shifting circumstance to bottom and base on the rock below. I put the question in its eternal form,—the form in which, how often soever suppressed for a season, it can never be finally subdued, but will remain and return, outliving and outlasting the corruption and cowardice of generations. I view it as ages will

view it—not through the mists of a famine, but by the living lights of the firmament. You may possibly be induced to reject it in the form I propose, and accept it in the other. If so, you will accept the question, and employ it as a weapon against England, in a shape and under conditions which deprive it of half its strength. You will take and work it fettered and handcuffed—not otherwise.

I trouble myself as little as any one does about the "conquest" as taken abstractedly—as an affair that took place long ages ago. But that "conquest" is still in existence, with all its rights, claims, laws, relations, and results. The landlord holds his lands by right and title of conquest, and uses his powers as only a conqueror may. The tenant holds under the law of conquest—*væ victis.*

What forms the right of property in land? I have never read in the direction of that question. I have all my life been destitute of Books. But from the first chapter of Blackstone's second book, the only page I ever read on the subject, I know that jurists are unanimously agreed in considering "first occupancy" to be the only true original foundation of the right of property and possession of land.

Now, I am prepared to prove that "occupancy" wants every character and quality that could give it moral efficacy as a foundation of right. I am prepared to prove this, when "occupancy" has first been *defined*. If no definition can be given, I am relieved from the necessity of showing any claim founded on occupancy to be weak and worthless.

To any plain understanding the right of private property is very simple. It is the right of man to possess, enjoy, and transfer, the substance and use of whatever *he has himself* CREATED. This title is good against the world; and it is the *sole* and *only* title by which a valid right of absolute private property can possibly vest.

But no man can plead any such title to a right of property in the substance of the soil.

The earth, together with all it *spontaneously* produces, is the free and common property of all mankind, of natural right, and by the grant of God;—and all men being equal, no man, therefore, has a right to appropriate exclusively to himself any part or portion thereof, except with and by the *common consent* and *agreement* of all other men.

The sole original right of property in land which I acknowledge to be *morally* valid, is this

right of common consent and agreement. Every other I hold to be fabricated and fictitious, null, void, and of no effect.

In the original and natural state of mankind, existing in independent families, each man must, in respect of actual fact, either *take* and *hold* (ASSUME OCCUPANCY as well as *maintain possession of*) his land by right and virtue of such consent and agreement as aforesaid, with all those who might be in a position to dispute and oppose his doing so; or he must take and maintain possession *by force.* The fictitious right of occupancy—invented by jurists to cover and account for a state of settlement otherwise unaccountable and indefensible on moral principle—this right would be utterly worthless, and could seldom accrue; for except in such a case as that of a single individual thrown on a desert island, the *question of right* would generally arise, and require to be settled *before* any colourable "title by occupancy" could be established, or even actual occupation be effected. And then—*what constitutes* occupancy? What length of possession gives "title by occupancy?"

When independent families have united into separate tribes, and tribes swelled into nations, the same law obtains;—each tribe or nation has

but either one or other of two available rights to stand upon—they must take and maintain territorial possession by consent and agreement with all other tribes and nations; or they must take and hold by the *tenure of chivalry* in the right of their might.

Putting together and proceeding on the principles now stated, it will appear that, if those principles be sound, no man can legitimately claim possession or occupation of any portion of land or any right of property therein, except by grant from the people, at the will of the people, as tenant to the people, and on terms and conditions made or sanctioned by the people;—and that every right, except the right so created and vesting by grant from the people, is nothing more or better than the right of the robber who holds forcible possession of what does not lawfully belong to him.

The present proprietors of Ireland do not hold or claim by grant from the people, nor even—except in Ulster—by any species of imperfect agreement or assent of the people. They got and keep their lands in the robber's right—the right of conquest—in despite, defiance, and contempt of the people. Eight thousand men are owners of this entire island,—claiming the right

of enslaving, starving, and exterminating eight millions. We talk of asserting free-government, and of ridding ourselves of foreign domination—while, lo! eight thousand men are lords of our lives—of us and ours, blood and breath, happiness or misery, body and soul. Such is the state of things in every country where the settlement of the lands has been effected by *conquest.* In Ulster the case is somewhat different, *much* to the advantage of the people, but not so much as it ought to have been. Ulster was not merely *conquered* but *colonized*—the native race being expelled, as in the United States of America:—and the settlement that prevails was made by a sort of consent and agreement among the conquering race.

No length of time or possession can sanction claims acquired by robbery, or convert them into valid rights. The people are still rightful owners, though not in possession. "Nullum tempus occurrit Deo,—nullum tempus occurrit populo."

In many countries besides this, the lands were acquired, and long held, by right of force or conquest. But in most of them the settlement and laws of conquest have been abrogated, amended, or modified, to a greater or lesser extent. In some, an outrise of the people has

trampled them down,—in some, the natural laws have triumphed over them,—in some, a despotic monarch or minister has abolished or altered them. In Ireland alone they remain unchanged, unmitigated, unmollified, in all their original ferocity and cruelty, and the people of Ireland must now abolish them, or be themselves abolished, and this is *now* the *more urgent* business.

CLEARING THE DECKS.

From the *Irish Felon*, July 22nd, 1848.

It is never the mass of a people that forms its real and efficient might. It is the men by whom that mass is moved and managed. All the great acts of history have been done by a very few men. Take half a dozen names out of any revolution upon record, and what would have been the result.

Not Scotland, but Wallace, barred and baffled Edward. Not England, but Cromwell, struck a king from his seat. Not America, but six or eight American men, put stripes and stars on the banner of a nation. To quote examples, however, is needless; they must strike at once on every mind.

If Ireland be conquered now—or what would be worse—if she fails to fight, it will certainly not be the fault of the people at large, of those who form the rank and file of the nation. The failure and fault will be that of those who have assumed to take the office of commanding and conducting the march of a people for liberty,

without, perhaps, having any commission from nature to do so, or natural right, or acquired requisite. The general population of this island are ready to find and furnish everything which can be demanded from the mass of a people—the numbers, the physical strength, the animal daring, the health, hardihood, and endurance. No population on earth of equal amount would furnish a more effective military conscription. We want only competent leaders—men of courage and capacity—men whom nature meant and made for leaders, not the praters and pretenders, and bustling botherbys of the old agitation. These leaders are yet to be found. Can Ireland furnish them ? It would be a sheer and absurd blasphemy against nature to doubt it. The first blow will bring them out. But very many of our present prominent leaders must first retire or be dismissed. These men must at once be got rid of utterly. They *must*. There is nothing else for it. They are stopping our way, clinging round our arms, giving us up to our enemies. Many of them came into this business from the mere desire of gaining little personal distinctions on safe terms, and at a cheap and easy rate of obtaining petty honours and offices—of making a small Dublin reputation—of creating a parish

fame or a tea-table fame. They will never suffer the national movement to swell beyond the petty dimensions which they are able, themselves, to manage and command; and are, therefore, a source not of strength, but of weakness, and the source of all our weakness. But for them we could walk down the utmost force of England in one month.

In a movement of the nature which has been going on for years in this country, it was impossible to prevent the intrusion into offices of command of that class of men who mar success instead of making it. Indeed it was into their hands those offices have been almost exclusively confided up to the present hour. This can hardly be called a mistake, for it was unavoidable. The movement, naturally and of necessity, belonged to them. It was of the mock-heroic order, the machinery of which none but mean hands could undertake or be competent to manage. The class of men who make Revolutions, and who doubtless exist here as elsewhere, have been altogether disgusted and driven away from the service of their country by the peculiar character of that sort of "struggle for freedom," the system of "moral agitation" which Ireland thought fit to adopt; and from which their pride of manhood

and pride of country revolted. The staff of leaders which that system created, and has left behind it, is composed of men utterly unfit, and unwilling to take charge of a military struggle, and who ought at once to be superseded and replaced. For two generations—may history forget to mention them—those men have been working to do this—the best work that ever yet was done for tyranny—to take from the people the terror of their name and make popular movement a mockery. And what now are they working to do? To hold Ireland down, hand and foot, while her chains are being locked and double locked; and her four noble prisoners * sent fettered and hand-cuffed to a penal colony of England—hear it, O Earth and hear it, O God! —for saying that Ireland should suffer famine no more. Oh! worse for us than the foreign tyrant is the native traitor; and worse than the open traitor in the enemy's ranks is the vile trickster and the base craven in our own. Away with them! They must quit at once or be quashed. One man, and every man, of those now in the prison of Newgate, is worth a host of the dastards and drivellers who are bidding you stand

* Smith O'Brien, Meagher, McManus, and O'Donoghue had just been sentenced to transportation.—ED.

by and "bide your time," while your best and bravest are being transported as felons in the face of your city, in the sight of two islands, and in view of all earth.

But how are you to know them, those menials of England in the green livery of their country? By this shall ye know them. Any man who objects to every plan of armed resistance that is proposed, while he produces none or no better one of his own. Or any man who tells you that an act of armed resistance—even if made so soon as to-morrow—even if offered by ten men only—even if offered by men armed only with stones—any man who tells you that such an act of resistance would be premature, imprudent, or dangerous—any and every such man should at once be spurned and spat at. For, remark you this and recollect it, that *somewhere*, and *somehow*, and by *somebody*, a *beginning must* be made; and that the *first* act of resistance is always, and must be ever, premature, imprudent, and dangerous. Lexington was premature, Bunker's Hill was imprudent, and even Trenton was dangerous.

There are men who speak much to you of prudence and caution, and very little of any virtue beside. But every vice may call itself by the

name of some one virtue or other; and of prudence there are many sorts. Cowardice may call itself, and readily pass for, caution; and of those who preach prudence, it behoves to inquire what kind of prudence it is they speak of, and to what class of prudent persons they belong themselves. There is a prudence the virtue of the wisest and bravest—there is a prudence the virtue of beggars and slaves. Which class do those belong to who are prating now for prudence, and against premature insurrection, while rejecting every proceeding and plan for preparation?

Against the advice of those men, and all men such as they, I declare my own.

In the case of Ireland now there is but *one fact* to deal with, and *one question* to be considered. The *fact* is this—that there are at present in occupation of our country some 40,000 armed men, in the livery and service of England; and the *question* is—how best and soonest to kill and capture those 40,000 men.

If required to state my own individual opinion, and allowed to choose my own time, I certainly would take the time when the full harvest of Ireland shall be stacked in the haggards. But not infrequently *God* selects and sends His own seasons and occasions; and oftentimes, too, an

enemy is able to force the necessity of either fighting or failing. In the one case, we ought not, in the other we surely cannot, attempt waiting for our harvest-home. If opportunity offers, we must dash at that opportunity—if driven to the wall, we must wheel for resistance. Wherefore, let us fight in September, if we may —but sooner, if we must.

Meanwhile, however, remember this—that somewhere, and somehow, and by somebody, a beginning must be made. Who strikes the first blow for Ireland? Who draws first blood for Ireland? Who wins a wreath that will be green for ever?

The *Irish Felon* was suppressed by the Government after the appearance of the number in which the above article appeared.

THE RIGHTS OF LABOUR.

[This article appeared in the *Irish Tribune* for July 1st, 1848, without a signature, but it has been attributed to Lalor.]

MAN was created free, and is at the same time a social being; that is, in order to enjoy the advantages which society can give, each individual tacitly agrees to relinquish as much of his freedom as may be found incompatible with the existence of society. All men are abstractedly equal, and should be so in law, but are not so in fact, for we find a wide difference between men, as well physically as morally and intellectually. Our actual happiness depends entirely upon the results of labour; and as this labour is affected by our physical, moral, and intellectual powers its amount must vary with the individual, and consequently the happiness which he can enjoy will depend on himself if the basis of society is just.

Every man is entitled to an equal share of the land, and of all other things which are the free gifts of Nature. These are the raw materials, from which, by his labour, he is to obtain the

necessaries of life; but this right he possesses only during his life-time—he cannot will them to another, nor exert any influence on their disposal after his death. Every member of the community is entitled to an equal share of the property of those who die; but as such a division could with difficulty be made, society allows each individual to inherit the property of his father or other kinsman in lieu of the share to which he would be entitled of the general property.

The labour of man produces, in most instances, more than he actually requires to support life: this surplus, which he possesses in the form of tools, buildings, etc., is called capital, or wealth, and in a flourishing state of society continually increases; it is its possession which constitutes the real difference between the savage and civilised man. As one individual may be morally, physically, or intellectually superior to another, he will naturally, by the use of his labour, obtain more products—that is, more capital, or wealth—than the other: and as the arrangements of society allow the children to inherit the capital of the father, it must necessarily happen that great inequalities must exist in every society in relation to wealth; that, in fact, there must be

rich and poor. This arrangement of society is just, and could not be otherwise. Although some may be born poor, and therefore inheriting no accumulated labour or capital, they cannot, therefore, justly demand that a new distribution of wealth should take place—that the property of the rich should be given to them. But, on the other hand, society cannot demand from them to become machines, to work to an extent unheard of among savages, and yet deny them that comfort, and that share in progress which ought to be the sole end of civilisation. The poor man is entitled to live; in the fullest sense of the word he is entitled to share in all the accumulated advantages of civilisation, not only as regards his physical happiness, but also his moral and intellectual cultivation. Why should he alone have no future, except that of suffering? Why should anyone dare to debar him of the enjoyment of domestic ties, those greatest incentives to virtue?

The ancient civilisation of Greece permitted the same inequalities of rich and poor as our modern civilisation does; but with the Greeks the intellectual and moral man was the highest object of study. They laboured and accumulated capital; but the rich among them, instead

of employing the whole of that accumulated capital in debasing the men who made it, by subjecting them more and more, or in ministering to their own animal senses, sacrificed their merely personal comfort to the public enjoyment of the nation. Hence were produced those masterpieces of art which we can only admire, but not imitate. The poor Athenian citizen was not taught that his sole business on earth was to labour incessantly, and that enjoyment was only for the rich; no, he felt that it was his right, his business to discuss in the public places the affairs of his country, to enjoy the pleasure of the theatre, to hear the great truths enunciated by the philosophers, to attend the games, and that it was his duty, as it is in all free States, to defend his country as a soldier.

During the Middle Ages the peasants were the serfs of the nobility; but although the conditions of their tenure were hard, although frequently robbed of all the fruits of their labours, they had a real interest in the land—an interest which in some countries they were able to transmit to their children. They were poor, but not destitute, no pauper class. Those who did not possess land were the servants of the lords, and, as such, were always certain of obtaining the first

necessaries of life. The burgher class of the towns was a manly race, which pursued its peaceful occupations within the walled towns, and, when necessary, defended their rights and properties by the sword against the nobility which surrounded them, whose trade then, as now, was plundering the industrious classes. Each trade formed a guild, itself under the protection of a patron saint. The guild regulated the conditions of apprenticeship, and prevented the trade from being overstocked by taking too many apprentices. This apprenticeship was a useful custom; it required a considerable sacrifice of time, and consequently of money, and, therefore, prevented too great competition; it kept up a sympathy between the employer and the employed, as the apprentice, in most cases, resided with the master. The apprentice's hours of labour were also limited, and he thus had ample means to amuse and improve himself. When the apprentice became a journeyman, and received wages, he did not immediately marry, but went to other towns, and worked there for some time, and thus increased his knowledge and experience; and when he accumulated sufficient capital, he became a master, settled in the place best suited to his business, took apprentices and

employed journeymen, and then only did he marry. The masters in those days were only small capitalists, as each man endeavoured to be one; but they were sure of independence, for they did not believe that the market for their goods depended on unlimited production, and hence ruinous competition, but on the income of the country—on the fact of the people, the masses, possessing wealth. It is not the few rich in a country which consumes the products of labour—they only consume luxuries, and these luxuries must always give but a precarious employment—it is the diffusion of wealth among the population generally which regulates the demand, and ensures the labourer from sudden and ruinous fluctuations, and this system of numerous small manufacturers produced that result. And yet these masters must have been wealthy, numerous as they were, else they could not have raised those mighty symbols of religion which excite our admiration, or those beautiful, though quaint, town-halls which grace even the smallest continental town. Look at the cities of palaces, with their gorgeous frescoes, of republican Venice, Genoa the superb, and Florence. Have our great capitalists anything similar to point to? Alas, no! Our characteristics are prisons and workhouses.

What a contrast does not the position of the poor in our days present to that which we have just noticed! A few individuals have gotten possession of the whole of the land, which they look upon as theirs absolutely, to do with it whatever it may please them. This, as it suits them, is allotted to cattle or to men, the latter being the worse treated, for although they consider them both as having been created by the Almighty for their sole use and benefit, yet as the value of the cattle is in the beasts themselves, they take care that they are well fed and housed; but as the value of the men consists in the result of their labour, and as they are worth nothing when worked out, they can readily be replaced by new ones: the landlord Thugs would therefore consider it a waste of capital to either feed, clothe, or house them. And when they grow dissatisfied with the amount of plunder which they can obtain, they cleanse the land of such offal, and renew the stock. These pariahs, or, as they are denominated, "surplus population," have no refuge in Ireland, save a shallow grave, uncoffined and unnamed, or the charnel-houses denominated "workhouses." In England, however, they sometimes pass through another stage before they find this, their last resting-place;

they become labourers in manufactories, and add to the number of those truly miserable and undenominated wretches who form a large proportion of the population of all manufacturing towns. Here a new system commences, exactly similar in its effect to that of the landlord Thugs: a few men possessing not real capital but money, or rather a still more fictitious one called credit, having taken advantage of the discoveries of science, establish large factories, and employ labourers, not men only, but women, and children of the tenderest age; these they enclose in large, low, ill-ventilated rooms from the earliest dawn until night; nay, often robbing their weary bodies of their natural slumber. To them Nature displays her charms in vain; no eloquence, no music, no poetry, as with the Greeks, the Venetians, and the Florentines, is afforded them as a relaxation from their toil—nay, their masters

> "Grudge them e'en the breeze that once a week
> Might make them feel less weary and deject."

They become weak in body, depraved in morals, and the monotony of their employment dulls their intellect, and what is their reward? To be badly fed, badly clothed, and worse housed, and liable at any moment, from circumstances over

which they have no control, to be deprived of all employment. This class, resembling the Proletarii of the Roman Empire, is increasing with fearful rapidity, and will one day revenge all their wrongs on their oppressors, but will also, it is to be feared, destroy society itself. This class may be called the *destitute*, to distinguish them from the general poor.

With the breaking down of the old society and the commencement of the present state of things, a new science was created, which had for its object the study of the social condition of man; and to this science the name of political economy has been given. This science has attracted great attention in England, because the evils of the present social system have been more developed there than in any other country. It is only there, or in countries blasted by her rule, that *true pauperism* exists in all its unmitigated horrors. The desire to accumulate wealth and the state of things produced by this desire, naturally led everybody to study a science which he was given to understand would help him to attain his end, and hence whole libraries have been written on the subject; but what is termed the science of political economy in England bears the same relation to that science as the

quackery of Parr or Holloway does to the science of medicine.

We do not, however, mean to say that the English political economists have never enunciated any truths; on the contrary, a good many valuable laws have been deduced by Adam Smith and others; but the errors which they have promulgated far outnumber the truths, and have done incalculable mischief. They have materialized everything; with them the sole object of existence is the production of wealth, not the advantages which its equable distribution would have on the community. They only look to the actual sum total of the wealth of a country, even when that wealth is in the hands of a few millionaires, while the masses are debased paupers—with them England is the most flourishing country in the world, because from acting on their principles it possesses in the aggregate more wealth than most other nations; but they forget that one half of the population is reduced to a state of degradation unparalleled in Europe. They make that *the end* for which we *live*, which most other nations consider *the means* by which we may *enjoy life*. Under their influence the arts, abstract science, or a healthy literature can with difficulty flourish.

Sismondi's answer to Ricardo, one of the most eminent of them, gives in one sentence their whole character:—"*What, is wealth then everything! are men absolutely nothing?*" In Ireland what is bad in their principles has been acted upon, but the good has been totally neglected. We hear constantly our flippant *ameliorators*, and turnip-headed candidates for prominent places, whose knowledge of legislation has been gleaned from the leaders of a superficial Press, or the stupid speeches of a class of "gentlemen" little better informed than themselves, talk about *capital* and a few other words which are only sounds devoid of meaning to them. We would be fortunate if all our economists were of the same value; what injury, for instance, could we suffer from such trash as the "Clarendonian talk about Repeal," etc.? But there are others whose poison is more insidious, and who have taken the best means of diffusing it through our veins—such as one Whately,* a goodly specimen of the foreign vermin we have allowed to crawl over us—of such we must beware; already they have received a *few lessons* from another quarter, and the *Irish Tribune* will continue the tuition from time to time.

* Richard Whately, Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, whose economical heresies were thrust upon Irish children in the National School books.—ED.

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